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Sacred Biography
OR THE
HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS:

BEING
A COURSE OF LECTURES,

DELIVERED AT
THE SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY
HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

VOLUME I.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.

John viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Revelation i. 8.

Seventh Edition.

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P R E F A C E.

ON giving a new, corrected, and uniform Edition of SACRED BIOGRAPHY, it is impossible for me to refrain from expressing the gratitude I feel for the very favourable reception with which that Work has been honoured. Having proved so generally acceptable, there is ground to hope that it may have been useful. In the view of supporting and of extending that utility, I thought it my duty carefully to revise the whole, and to rectify, as far as I was able, the mistakes, both in sense and diction, which had found their way into prior impressions. At the same time I did not feel myself at liberty materially to alter, add, or suppress; for what an author himself may deem an improvement is not always such in the eye of his Reader, and to give a re-impression of the same book was the point in question. In perfect consistency with this, it appeared expedient to diminish the number of

volumes, without curtailing or omitting any one lecture. The only awkward circumstance arising out of this arrangement is, that the six introductory lectures cannot all be placed, as before, in the front of so many respective volumes: but this, surely, is amply compensated by the reduction of price, of which it admits, notwithstanding the enormous rise in the price of paper.

A course of Lectures on the GOSPEL HISTORY was delivered, at my own Church, upwards of twelve years ago, and favourably received. The publication of these two was called for; but the apprehension of swelling to an undue size a production originally of very limited prospects, forbade proceeding, and these lectures have accordingly been thus long suppressed. The preceding volumes, however, have been for some time out of print, and the demand continuing, I considered it as a duty both to the Public and to myself, to prepare for a republication. This produced an application, frequently made before, that I would repeat from the pulpit the lectures on the History of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and then commit them to the press. In compliance with this, they were delivered in a

series, at the Scots Church, London-Wall, on the Lord's-days of November, December, and January last, and they now follow as a fifth volume of the present Edition. From the very nature of the thing, this could not possibly pretend to be considered as a whole. But is not every incident of our SAVIOUR'S life, a whole of itself, while it is in an intimate connexion with others, and a part of the stupendous WHOLE, which far transcends the comprehension of men and of angels? Though, therefore, the entire volume be but a fragment, each particular discourse aims at presenting one distinct and individual object, gradually melting away into another, and it may, of course, be read either separately, or as a link in a chain. The additional volume, and its predecessors, I again recommend to the blessing of God Almighty, and with equal deference, as in the beginning, cheerfully submit my work to the judgment of the candid, the serious, and the benevolent.

HENRY HUNTER.

Hoxton, 12th March, 1802.

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what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

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SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

LECTURE I.

ROMANS XV. 4.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

VARIOUS methods have been employed, at different periods, and by different persons, in order to convey useful knowledge to mankind. The knowledge most useful and important to man, is that of morals and religion. These sciences not only afford the pleasantest and most elevating subjects of meditation, but they evidently possess a very powerful influence over human happiness, both in the life which now is, and in that which is to come.

The principles of morality and religion have, by some, been delivered in short, plain, and significant sentences; and have been left to produce their effect by their own weight and evidence. Public teachers have, at other times, taken pains to explain and enforce those principles; have demonstrated their reasonableness and utility; and have exhibited the cri-

minality, the danger and misery, of neglecting or of transgressing them. The charms and graces of poetry have been employed to set off the native, modest beauties of truth and virtue, and allegory has spread her veil over them, in order to stimulate our ardour in the pursuit, and to heighten our pleasure in the discovery. The penetration of genius, the enchantment of eloquence, and the creative energies of fancy, have successively lent their aid to those gentle guides of human life, those condescending ministers to human comfort.

The historic page, that faithful and true witness, has been unfolded. Ages and generations long ago elapsed, have been made to pass in review; and the lessons of religion and virtue have been forcibly inculcated, by a fair and impartial display of the effects, which the observance or neglect of them have produced on the affairs of men. And the pencil of history has enriched the canvas, not only with men in groups, but, by selecting distinguished individuals, by delineating them in their just proportions, and enlivening them with the colours of nature, has exhibited a magnificent collection of striking portraits, for our entertainment and instruction. In contemplating these we seem to expatiate in a vast gallery of family pictures, and we take delight in observing and comparing the various features of the extensive kindred, as they resemble, or as they differ from, each other; and through the physiognomy piercing into the heart, we find them, though dead, yet speaking and pleasing companions.

The Holy Scriptures possess an acknowledged superiority over all other writings, in all the various kinds of literary composition; and in no one respect more, ~~this~~ in that species of historical composition, which is called BIOGRAPHY, or a delineation of the fortunes, character, and conduct of individuals: and that, whether the historians be themselves the men whom they describe and record; or whether, from proper sources of information, they record the lives and actions of other men.

These Lectures, my Friends, undertaken at your request, and humbly submitted to your candid and patient attention; and, permit me to add, intended for your religious instruction and improvement, will, through the help of God, present you with a course of SACRED BIOGRAPHY, that is to say, with the more particular and detached history of the lives of those eminent and distinguished personages, whom Divine Providence raised up, and whom the Holy Spirit has in the Scriptures of truth represented, either as patterns for us to imitate, or as objects of disesteem and aversion. We shall endeavour to compare together those which possess more obvious and striking marks of resemblance or of dissimilitude; and they shall be brought, one after another, into comparison with that pure and perfect example of all excellence, which was exhibited by Him, who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

Happy will your Lecturer esteem himself, if he

shall in any measure attain, what he ardently desires, the power of blending profit with delight for your use; the power with which the lively Oracles of God furnish him, that of rendering the errors and the vices, as well as the wisdom and the virtue of others, beneficial unto you.

In order to justify the design, for we presume not to answer for the execution, it shall be our endeavour to show the propriety and usefulness of this mode of instruction in general, and to display the peculiar advantages which the sacred Writers enjoy, in thus communicating useful knowledge; and which we of course possess, in the diligent and attentive perusal of their writings: and this shall serve as an Introductory Lecture to the Course.

We begin with attempting to show the propriety and usefulness of conveying moral and religious instruction, by means of the historical representation of the characters and conduct of individuals, as opposed to the object of general history.

Now the professed purpose of all history is, without fear or favour, without partiality or prejudice, to represent men and things as they really are, to the end that goodness may receive its just tribute of praise, and that vice may meet its deserved censure and condemnation. It is evident that this end is most easily, and most certainly attained, when our attention is confined to one particular object, or to a few at once. This may be ascertained by the feelings and operations of the mind, in the contemplation of other objects.

When, from the summit of some lofty mountain, we survey the wide extended landscape; though highly delighted, we feel ourselves bewildered, overwhelmed, by the profusion and variety of beauties which Nature spreads around us. But when we enter into the detail of Nature; when we attend the footsteps of a friend through some favoured, beautiful, sequestered spot, which the eye and the mind can take in at once; feeling ourselves at ease, with undivided, undistracted attention we contemplate the whole; we examine and arrange the parts; the imagination is indeed less expanded, but the heart is more gratified; our pleasure is less violent and tumultuous, but it is more intense, more complete, and it continues much longer; what is lost in respect of sublimity, is gained in perspicuity, force, and duration.

Take another instance:—The starry Heavens present a prospect equally agreeable to every eye. The delights of a calm, serene evening, are as much relished by the simple and unlettered, as by the philosopher. But who will compare the vague admiration of the child, or of the clown, with the scientific joy of the astronomer, who can reduce into order, what to the untutored eye is involved in confusion; who can trace the path of each little star; and who, from their past appearances, can calculate, to an instant of time, their future oppositions and conjunctions?

Once more:—It is highly gratifying to find ourselves in the midst of a public assembly of agreeable people of both sexes, and to partake of the ge-

neral cheerfulness and benevolence, But what are the cheerfulness and benevolence of a public assembly, compared to the endearments of friendship, and the meltings of love? To enjoy these, we must retire from the crowd, and have recourse to the individual. In like manner, whatever satisfaction and improvement may be derived from the general histories of mankind, which we would not be thought by any means to depreciate; yet the history of particular persons, if executed with fidelity and skill, while it exercises the judgment less severely, so it fixes down the attention more closely, and makes its way more directly and more forcibly to the heart.

To those who are acquainted with this species of composition, much need not be said, to evince the superior excellency of the sacred Penmen. Biographers merely human necessarily lie under many disadvantages, and they are liable to many mistakes. The lapse of time is incessantly thickening the veil which is spread over remote persons and events. The materials of history lie buried, confounded, dispersed, among the ruins of antiquity; and they cannot be easily distinguished and separated, even by the eye of discernment, and the hand of integrity, from the rubbish of fiction. And as they are not always furnished by truth and nature, so neither are they always selected with judgment, nor employed with taste and discretion.

Men, who only see the outside, must of necessity infer the principle of human actions from the actions themselves. And yet no rule of judgment is

more erroneous: for experience assures us, that many, perhaps the greater part of our actions, are not the result of design, and are not founded on principle, but are produced by the concurrence of incidents which we could not foresee, and proceed from passions which were kindled at the moment.

Besides, every man sits down to write, whether of ages past, or of the present, of characters nearer or more remote, with a bias upon his mind; and this he naturally endeavours to communicate to his reader. All men have their favourite periods, causes, characters; which, of course, they strive, at any rate, to embellish, to support, to recommend. They are equally subject to antipathies on the other hand, under the influence of which, they, as naturally, study to depress, to expose, and to censure, what they dislike. And as men write and speak, so they read and hear, under the influence of prejudice and passion. Where the historian's opinions coincide with our own, we cheerfully allow him to be in the right; when they differ, without hesitation we pronounce him to be mistaken.

Most of the writers of profane ancient history are chargeable with an absurdity, which greatly discredits the facts they relate, and which reduces their works almost to the level of fable. They attempt too much; they must needs account for every thing; they fall into conjecture when light fails them; and, because it is probable or certain that eminent men employed eloquence on important public occasions, their historians, at the distance of many centuries,

without record or written document of any kind whatever, have, from the ample store of a fertile imagination, furnished posterity with the elaborate harangues of generals, statesmen, and kings. These, it is acknowledged, are among the most ingenious, beautiful, and interesting of the traces of antiquity which have been transmitted to us: what man of taste could bear to think of stripping those elegant performances of one of their chief excellencies? But truth is always injured, by every the slightest connexion with fable. The moment that I begin to read one of the animated speeches of a hero or of a senator, which were never composed, delivered, or written, till the historian arose, I feel myself instantly transported from the real theatre of human life, into a fairy region: I am agreeably amused, nay, delighted, but the sacred impress of truth is rendered fainter and feebler to my mind; and when I lay down the book, it is not the fire and address of the speaker, but the skill and ingenuity of the writer that I admire.—Modern history, more correct and faithful than ancient, has fallen, however, into an absurdity not much less censurable. I mean that fanciful delineation of character, with which the account of certain periods, and the lives of distinguished personages, commonly conclude; in which we often find a bold hypothesis hazarded for the sake of a point; and a strong feature added to, or taken away from a character, merely to enable the author to round his period.

Finally, a great part of profane history is alto-

gether uninteresting to the bulk of mankind.—The events therein recorded are removed to a vast distance, and they have now entirely spent their force. The actors exhibited are either too lofty to admit of our approach, with any interest or satisfaction to ourselves; or too brutal to be considered without disgust, or too low to be worthy of our regard. The very scenes of action are become inaccessible or unknown; they are altered, obliterated, or disregarded. —Where Alexander conquered, and how Cæsar fell, are to us mere nothings.

But on opening the Sacred Volume, all these obstructions in the way of knowledge, of truth, of pleasure, and of improvement, instantly disappear. Length of duration can oppose no cloud to that intelligence, with which “a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.” The human heart is there unfolded to our view, by Him, “who knows what is in man,” and “whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” The men, and the events, therein represented are universally and perpetually interesting, for they are blended with “the things which accompany salvation,” and they affect our everlasting peace. There, the writers, whether they speak of themselves or of other men, are continually under the direction of the Spirit of all truth and wisdom. Those venerable men, though subject to like passions with others, there, speak not of themselves, but from God; “for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they

“ were moved by the Holy Ghost. And all Scripture
“ is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable
“ for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for in-
“ struction in righteousness; that the man of God
“ may be perfect; thoroughly furnished unto all
“ good works.”

Having premised these things, we will proceed next Lord's Day, if God permit, to the execution of our plan; and shall begin, as the order both of Nature and of Scripture prescribes, with the history of Adam, the venerable father and founder of the human race.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers, we are about to study the lives of other men; but it concerns us much more to look well to our own. Our forefathers were; we are. The curtain has dropped, and has hidden ages and generations past from our eyes.* Our little scene is proceeding; and it must likewise speedily close.—We are not indeed, perhaps, furnishing materials for history. When we die, time will probably spread the veil of oblivion over us. But let it be ever remembered by all, that every man's life is of importance to himself, to his family, to his friends, to his country, and in the sight of God. They were by no means the best men, who have made most noise in the world; neither were those actions most deserving of praise, which have obtained the greatest share of fame. Scenes of violence and blood; the workings of ambition, of pride, and of revenge, compose the annals of men. But piety and purity, temperance and humility,

which are little noticed, and soon forgotten, of the world, are held in everlasting remembrance before God. And happy had it been for many of those, whose names and deeds have been transmitted to us with renown, if they had never been.

One corruption subdued is a victory infinitely more desirable, and more truly honourable, than a triumph gained amidst the confused noise of ten thousand warriors, and as many garments rolled in blood; for "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Remember, my friends, that to be a child of God is far more honourable than to be descended from kings; and that a Christian is a much higher character than a hero. Let this consideration influence all that you undertake, all that you do. 'Act as if the eyes of Cato were always upon you,' was the precept given, and the motive urged, to the Roman youth, in order to stimulate them to acts of virtue. The eyes of God are in truth continually upon you. Live then as in his sight; and knowing that every action as it is performed, that every word as it is spoken, and that every thought as it arises, is recorded in the book of God's remembrance, and must come into judgment, "keep thy heart with all diligence," set a watch on the door of thy lips, and "whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God."

We are about to review ages past, and to converse with men long since dead. And the period is fast

approaching, when time itself shall be swallowed up; when Adam and his youngest son shall be contemporaries; when the mystery of Providence shall be cleared up, the mystery of grace finished, and the ways of God fully vindicated to men. In the humble and solemn expectation of that great event, knowing and believing the Scriptures, and the power of God, let us study to live a life of faith and holiness upon the Son of God; “redeeming the time, “because the days are evil,” and “working out our “own salvation with fear and trembling.” And may the God of our Fathers be our God, and the God of our offspring, and conduct us through the dangerous and difficult paths of human life, and through the valley of the shadow of death, to his own “presence, where there is fulness of joy, and “to his right hand, where there are pleasures for “evermore.” Amen.

LECTURE II.

GENESIS V. 5.

And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

IF to trace the origin of particular nations; if to mark, and to account for, the rise and progress of empire, to delineate the revolutions of states, to unfold the discovery of new worlds, be an interesting, pleasant, and useful exercise of the human mind; how amusing, interesting, and instructive must it be, to trace HUMAN NATURE itself up to its source! Placed as it were beneath the throne of God, it is pleasing to observe how the heavens and the earth took their beginning; to discover by what means this globe was at first peopled, and how it continues to be filled with men.—If there be a natural, and not illaudable propensity, in individuals, to dive into the pedigree of their families; and in nations, to fix that of their princes, heroes, and legislators; is it possible to be without curiosity, or to miss entertainment, when the history of the venerable Father of all Men is presented to our attention—the history of Adam, to whom we feel ourselves closely allied by condition and by blood, however unconnected we may seem to be with most of the collateral branches of the family: Adam, of whose nature we all par-

take: by whose conduct we are all affected; and in the consequences of whose actions we are all to this day involved?

In pursuing this important inquiry, we have God himself for our guide, and we plunge into the dark regions of the remotest antiquity, lighted by that gracious SPIRIT, to whom all nature stands confessed, and with whom the whole extent of time is a single point, an unchanging NOW.

GOD having framed and fitted up this vast fabric, this magnificent palace, the earth, worthy of the inhabitant whom he designed to occupy it, and worthy of himself; having formed, arranged, and fructified the various and innumerable vegetable and animal tribes; having created, suspended, and balanced the greater and the lesser lights, and settled the economy of the whole host of Heaven; at length, with all the solemnity and majesty of Deity, as with the maturity of deliberation, as with a peculiar effort of divine power and skill, He designs and produces ADAM, the first of men. When the earth is to be fashioned, and the ocean is to be poured into its appointed bed; when the firmament is to be expanded, and suns are to be lighted up, God says, *Let them be*, and they are created. But when MAN is to be made, the creating Power seems to make a solemn pause; He retires within himself, looks for a model by which to frame this exquisite piece of workmanship, and finds it in his own nature.—“ And God said, Let us “ make man in our image, after our likeness; and “ let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,

“ and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle,
“ and over all the earth, and over every creeping
“ thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God
“ created man in his own image, in the image of
“ God created he him, male and female created he
“ them.”—Gen. i. 26, 27.

Thus then was brought into existence, the father and founder of the human race.—And, How fair must that form have been, which the fingers of God framed, without the intervention of a second cause! How capacious that soul which the breath of God immediately inspired! But glorious and perfect as he is, Adam, upon his very first reflection, feels himself a dependant and a limited being. No sooner had his eye ascended to the God who made him, than it returns to the earth from whence he was taken; and the very first excursion of his reason informs him that he is at the disposal of another, and that he is restrained by a law. He receives a whole globe, over which he is permitted to exercise an unlimited sovereignty; but one tree is reserved, as a token of his subjection. Every plant in Paradise offers itself to gratify his sense, every animal does homage at his feet; but the sight of one kind of fruit in the midst of the garden continually reminds him, that he himself is dependant upon God, and accountable to Him; and while six parts of time are allowed for his own employments and delights, the seventh is set apart as sacred to his Maker.

Behold him then taking possession of his fair inheritance, of his vast empire, in all the majesty of

unclouded reason, in all the beauty of perfect innocence; possessed of every bodily, of every mental endowment. His numerous vassals of the brute creation present themselves before him: at one glance he discovers their nature and qualities, and gives them suitable names. But, while he is invested in the property of a world, he receives it as a charge for which he is to be responsible: "The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to keep it;" and he, for whom God and Nature had produced all things in a luxuriant abundance, has nevertheless employment assigned him; he is placed in the garden to dress it. And can any of his degenerate sons then dream of independent property; or dare to reckon want of employment to be an honourable distinction?

Behold him accepting his charge with submission and gratitude; entering on his employment with alacrity and joy; surveying his ample portion with complacency and delight. The prosecution of his pleasant task unfolds to him still new wonders of divine power and skill. The flower, and the shrub, and the tree, disclose their virtues, their uses, and their ends, to his observing eye. Every beast of the field spontaneously ministers to his pleasure or to his advantage; all the host of Heaven stands revealed to his capacious mind; and God himself, the great Lord of all, delights in him, and converses with him as a Father and a Friend.

But yet he is alone; and therefore, even in Paradise, but half blessed. The exulting heart of man

pants for communication of satisfaction, and the rich profusion of Eden is but half relished and enjoyed, because there is no partaker with him. Being corporeal and earthly, he is unfit for the society of pure spirits; being rational and divine, he is above the society of the most sagacious of the subject tribes.

“For Adam,” in the wide extended creation, “there was not found an help meet for him.” But no sooner is the want felt, than it is supplied. God, who does nothing imperfectly, at length makes the happiness of Paradise complete, and fills up the measure of Adam’s joy. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” Gen. ii. 21, 22.

What an important era in the life of Adam! What a new display of the Creator’s power, and skill, and goodness! How must the spirit of devotion be heightened, now that man could join in *social* worship! What additional satisfaction must he have felt in contemplating the frame, order, and course of nature, now that he possessed the most exalted of human joys, that of conveying knowledge to a beloved object! What heart-felt delight now that he can instruct Eve in the wonders of creation, and unfold to her their Maker’s nature, his perfections, and his will! What a new flavour have the fruits which grow in the garden of God acquired, now that

they are gathered by the hand of conjugal affection, and recommended to the taste by the smile of complacency and love! Ah! why were not joys like these permanent as they were pure? Was bliss like this bestowed but to be blighted? And must Adam's chief felicity issue in his ruin?

We are reluctantly brought forward to that awful revolution, which at length took place in Adam's condition and in his character. Of the duration of his innocence and happiness we have no account. His history now becomes blended with that of the wicked and malignant spirit, who had "left his first estate" of holiness and felicity: and who, having artfully seduced our first parents from their innocence, exposed them to the wrath of God, procured their expulsion from Paradise, rendered them a prey to fear, shame, and remorse, and subjected them to pain, disease, and death.

The circumstances of the case, according to the Scripture account of it, were these. The Devil observed the serpent to be an animal of peculiar sagacity and penetration, and fixes on him as a fit instrument of seduction. Fearing a repulse from the superior firmness and discernment of the Man, he watches for, and finds the unhappy moment, when the Woman, being separated from her husband, opposed to his wiles inferior powers of reason and of intelligence, with greater softness and pliancy. He addresses himself to a principle in her nature, the immoderate indulgence of which has proved fatal to so many thousands of her daughters, *curiosity*; cu-

riosity, the investigator of truth, the mother of invention ; curiosity, the prompter to rashness, the parent of danger, the guide to ruin. Having first gained her attention, he excites her to doubt and to reason in the face of a positive command ; he awakens in her a spirit of pride and ambition ; and at length persuades her to make the fatal experiment. She eats of the prohibited tree, and, by transgression, she acquires the knowledge of *evil*, whereas she had hitherto known only *good*.

By what arguments Adam was prevailed upon to become a partner in her guilt, we are not informed. From the apology he made for his conduct, it is to be inferred that female insinuation and address misled him from the law of his God. And thus were both ruined by the operation of principles in themselves good and useful ; but carried to excess, because unchecked by reason, and unawed by religion. Eve perished by a curious and ambitious desire after a condition, for which God and Nature had not designed her, a desire to be “ as God, to know good “ and evil ;” Adam fell by complaisance to his wife, carried to unmanly weakness and compliance, yielding to his subject, bidding defiance to his Sovereign.

And what words can express, what heart can conceive, the bitter change ! All his posterity have experienced the melancholy transition from health to sickness, from ease to pain : very many have passed from affluence to indigence, from glory to shame, and a few have exchanged empire itself for ba-

nishment or a dungeon. But more than the accumulated weight of all these at once, falls on the devoted head of our guilty first Father. The eyes, which before met the approach of God with rapture, now are clouded with sorrow, tremble with fear, or strain with remorse and horror, at the voice of the Almighty. That tongue which was once tuned only to the accents and the language of love, has in a moment learned to reproach and to upbraid. The heart which glowed at the promise and the prospect of a fair, numerous, and happy progeny, now sinks in dejection at the dismal apprehension of that guilt and woe, in which his folly had plunged all his hapless children. Where innocence sat enthroned, there fell despair broods over her own stinging reflections, and tormenting fears. Above, he beholds the awful throne of an offended God; beneath, a fathomless gulf, kindled by the breath of Jehovah as a stream of brimstone; within, a troubled conscience, like the raging sea, incapable of taking rest. "The glory is departed; the gold is become dim, and the most fine gold changed."

And now too a revolution in outward circumstances takes place, corresponding to that which had passed on his internal constitution and character. Adam must no longer possess that Paradise of which he had rendered himself unworthy. Justice drives out from Eden the man, who had cast himself out from the favour of God. A wall reaching up to Heaven, and immovable as the decree of the Eternal, prevents the possibility of return. The flaming sword

of the Cherubim bars all access to the tree of life. His labour, formerly his delight, must henceforward be accompanied with pain. The subject tribes throw off their allegiance, and they either shun, or threaten the Lord. The elements change their influence, and his fair domain becomes a vast solitude. The sole partner of his former joys, now become the cause and the companion of his guilt, becomes also the companion of his woe. Mutual reflections and reproaches embitter and increase their common misery; and stern death stares them in the face.

But will God contend for ever, will he be always wroth? Then "the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he has made." Behold a dawn of hope arises, and a promise of the Most High saves him from despair. The moment man becomes, and feels himself, a miserable offender, that moment is the Gospel preached unto him; as the woman was first in the transgression, so from her the prospect of salvation arises; and it is declared that "the old serpent who is the Devil and "Satan," who had, in deceiving her, destroyed her posterity, should by one who was peculiarly her posterity, be destroyed and slain. Thus they leave Eden, supported and cheered with the expectation of triumph over their bitter enemy, and of being restored at length to the favour of their offended God. To keep alive this hope, as well as to afford present relief from shame, at this period, it would appear, *sacrifice* was instituted. The same victim shed its blood, the type of atonement; and furnished its

skin to clothe the naked, thereby presenting the emblem of a perfect righteousness, to cover and shelter the naked soul. And thus early, distinctly, and unequivocally, was Christianity taught to mankind.

In process of time, however, Adam has the felicity of becoming a father; and he enjoys the satisfaction of seeing the blessing which was pronounced upon him in his better state, notwithstanding his apostacy, taking effect. Eve becomes the joyful mother, perhaps at one birth, of two sons, and the earth begins to be replenished. Behold the first parents of mankind exulting in affections unknown, unfelt before; exulting in this fresh proof that God had not forgotten to be gracious. Behold the nuptial tie strengthened and confirmed; the voice of upbraiding and reproach is turned into the language of gratulation, complacency, and love.

Adam observes, with growing delight, his sons increasing in stature and wisdom. Stung with keen reflection upon the happiness which he had vilely cast away, and upon the misery which he had entailed upon his hapless children, how would he exert himself to repair that loss! How forcibly inculcate, by his own fatal example, the obligations of God's holy law! With what gratitude would he lead them to the promised atonement! With what heartfelt delight infuse knowledge into their opening minds!

Man was destined to labour from the beginning; and, for his punishment, guilty man must labour with the sweat of his brow. But all the punish-

ments of Heaven in reality, and in the issue, are actual blessings. It is the privilege and the happiness of Adam, and of all his sons, to be employed, though to weariness and fatigue. Accordingly the heirs and possessors of the whole globe, as soon as they arrive at man's estate, betake themselves to the humble and necessary occupations of that simple state of human nature. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground."

But Adam, we find, has taught his sons to blend religion with their secular employments; nay to make their very employments the monitors and the means of religious worship. "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof; and the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had no respect." Gen. iv. 4, 5. And, How early did the different passions and affections of the human mind discover themselves! Abel brings with his offering an humble, pious, and believing spirit. Cain approaches the altar of God with a proud, selfish, murderous heart. And, melancholy it is to observe, the first quarrel in the world, the first human blood that was shed, were occasioned by religion, which is designed of God to be, and is in itself, the dearest bond of union among men.

An event now took place in Adam's family by which every former grief must have been renewed

and embittered; and to his inexpressible mortification he finds himself a root of bitterness, of which all his branches must, and do partake. Cain, incensed at the preference expressed for his brother's offering, burning with envy and resentment, watches his opportunity, and finding himself alone with him in the field, puts Abel to death. Thus man becomes the executioner of the dreadful sentence of the divine law, upon man—brother upon brother. What must have been the emotions of Adam's soul when these sad news were brought him! To lose a son, a pious, promising son: almost an only one; prematurely, unexpectedly, by the hand of his own brother!—The one dead! The other worse than dead, a wretch unworthy to live!—How would his own transgression again stare him in the face! How would he again accuse himself as the author of his own wretchedness, and the propagator of woe on woe to his posterity! The empire of Satan over this miserable world would now seem confirmed; and the purpose of the divine grace would be apparently defeated. But God yet takes pity on fallen guilty man, being mindful of his promise; and Seth is given to supply the loss of Abel. Seth, in whose line the promise runs, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ should come. And thus the divine interpositions always seasonably and suitably meet our necessities and our wishes.

Adam's own forfeited life is prolonged to many generations, and he lives to see his posterity increased to a great multitude, inventing and cultiva-

ting the arts which support, which adorn, or which comfort life. But the time approaches, at last, that he must die. Mercy flew as on the wings of a dove to his relief; Justice walks with slow and steady steps to his punishment. By himself sin had entered into the world, and death must inevitably follow, and pass upon him, and upon all men. He had seen the ghastly appearance of death, in the person of his murdered son; he must now drink the bitter cup for himself: "And the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."

This is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to his heart. And thus at length decayed the fabric which God himself had reared; thus "the dust returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it." And thus must conclude the history of every life, though protracted to a thousand years, whether adorned with virtues, or sullied with vice, whether passed with noise on the great theatre, or obscurely spent in the shade. To this complexion the wise and the beautiful, the brave and the good, as well as the simple and the homely, the timid and the vicious, must come at last. "Here the rich and the poor meet together; here the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

The next Lecture, if God permit, will attempt to exhibit to you the comparison and contrast of the first and second Adam: in the former of whom all died; and by the latter, an elect world is made

alive, and “raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Let us endeavour to improve what has been said; by learning habitually to acknowledge, to adore, and to serve the great Author and Preserver of our being, who has lavished so much goodness upon us; who adorned our nature with his own glorious image, who pitied us in our low and lost estate, and has laid help for us on one who is mighty to save: and who, by the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, is aiming at making us partakers of a divine nature, and delivering us from that bondage of corruption, into which we are sunk by reason of sin.

Let us learn, secondly, from the sad example of the first transgression, to rest contented with that state and condition which Providence has assigned to us in life; let us learn to use only lawful means for bettering it; to make the known will of God the only rule of our conduct; never to reason and tamper with temptation; but to repel or flee from it at once; and let us shun those as our worst enemies, who, on any occasion or pretence, would attempt to make us think lightly of the law of God.

Let me take occasion, thirdly, from that institution which God designed for the completion of human happiness in a state of innocence, and for the mutual assistance and comfort of the sexes, in their fallen condition, to censure and condemn that spirit and practice of celibacy, which is one of the

crying vices of our own age and country, and which is equally inimical to religion, to good morals, to public spirit, and to human comfort. He who says, or lives as if he thought that it is "good for man to be alone," gives the lie to his Maker; sins against the constitution of his nature; dishonours his parents; defrauds another of one of the justest rights of humanity, and in a case too where it is impossible so much as to complain; and exposes himself to commit offences against society, which are not to be mentioned in this place. In truth, celibacy is a vile compound of avarice and selfishness, which would fain pass upon the world for prudence and self-denial; and the state of our own country at present, in this respect, looks as if a single state, as in Roman Catholic countries, were established by law, but that the laity, not the clergy were bound by it. But, alas! I am only furnishing matter for a little conversation. There must be more virtue, religion, and good sense among the young men of the age, before this crying evil be remedied.

- Finally, let us take the conclusion of the book of God, and the bright prospect which it discloses to our view, to support and cherish us under the melancholy scene exhibited in the beginning of it. "According to his promise we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new." Rev. xxi. 5. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life,

“ clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of
“ God, and of the Lamb. In the midst of the
“ street of it, and of either side of the river, was
“ there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner
“ of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and
“ the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the
“ nations. And there shall be no more curse ; but
“ the throne of God, and of the Lamb, shall be in
“ it, and his servants shall be in it, and his ser-
“ vants shall serve him. And they shall see his
“ face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.
“ And there shall be no night there, and they need
“ no candle, neither light of the sun : for the Lord
“ God giveth them light, and they shall reign for
“ ever.” Rev. xxii. 1—5. “ I beheld, and lo, a
“ great multitude, which no man could number,
“ of all nations and kindreds, and people, and
“ tongues, stood before the throne, and before the
“ Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in
“ their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying,
“ Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the
“ throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels
“ stood round about the throne, and about the
“ elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the
“ throne on their faces, and worshipped God ; say-
“ ing, Amen : blessing, and glory, and wisdom,
“ and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and
“ might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.
“ And one of the elders answered, saying unto me,
“ What are these which are arrayed in white robes ?
“ And whence came they ? And I said unto him,

“ Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These
“ are they which came out of great tribulation, and
“ have washed their robes, and made them white in
“ the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before
“ the throne of God, and serve him day and night
“ in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne
“ shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no
“ more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the
“ sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb,
“ which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed
“ them, and shall lead them unto living fountains
“ of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from
“ their eyes.” Rev. vii. 9—17.

Thus the mercy of God and the blood of the Lamb remove the guilt, and rectify the disorders of sin. Thus guilty fallen man is recovered and restored. Thus the evils recorded in the first pages of the Bible are remedied and done away in that bright revelation of a world to come, which is opened to us in the close of it. Thus is Adam, and his renewed offspring, conducted from a terrestrial paradise, where the tree of knowledge of good and evil grew up among the trees of life, to the Paradise of God, where no mixture of evil intrudes itself, where none but the trees of life find a place. And thus the several parts of Divine Revelation explain, illustrate, strengthen, and confirm each other; and the whole taken together, exhibiting throughout one great leading object, carrying on one great design, and accomplishing, at length, the one original purpose of the ETERNAL, is gloriously perfect.

LECTURE III. *

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 45.

And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

THE frame of nature, the ways of Providence, and the work of redemption, mutually illuminate, explain, and support each other. The invisible things of God are clearly understood by the things which are made. The world is evidently upheld and governed by him who made it at first; and the suspension of the laws of nature, and the special interpositions of Divine Providence, constitute the proof, that the Gospel dispensation is from him who has the universe under his control, to continue or to change its appearance at his pleasure; from him who has all hearts in his hand, and, consequently, has all events at his disposal. When we attempt to contemplate the Providence of God, we immediately find it to be a system infinitely too vast for human capacity to take in, too complex for our penetration too unfold, too deep and mysterious for our understanding to fathom. All that we can do is to consider the detached parts of this majestic whole, as they present themselves to our senses, or to our reason; as they are transmitted to us in the history and experience of others; or as they are discovered to us by a revelation from Heaven. Without the Bible,

it were utterly impossible to give a tolerable account, much less one completely satisfactory, of the origin of the world, or of the appearances of nature; of the events which are past and are recorded, or those which are every day presenting themselves to our observation. But when reason vouchsafes to kindle her feeble lamp with fire from the altar of God, and to supply it continually with fresh oil from the sacred stores, what was formerly dark becomes clear; what before seemed intricate and perplexed, is found to be in perfect order and harmony; and the dim and scattered fragments become both legible and intelligible.

Nay, farther, the different parts of Scripture itself, taken separately and without connection, may seem to have less force, beauty, and importance; but when brought together, like the magnet and the steel, they immediately attract each other and unite; like the scattered bones in the valley, bone coming together to his bone, there starts up a perfect man, nay an exceeding great army. Type meeting the thing typified, prediction squaring with event, promise tallying exactly with accomplishment, Scripture acquires a solidity which bids defiance to all created force: becomes, in its own energetic language, "as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." The persons exhibited, the events recorded, the scenes described, the institutions enacted in one age and state of the world, which were the shadows of good things to come, are not only instructive and interesting in themselves, but likewise acquire a weight and importance which

they possessed not before, when viewed in their relation to Him, to whom all the prophets give witness, and whose person, character, and work, are the fulfilling of all that was written of old time.

The History of Adam ministers both pleasure and instruction to us as man : but Christians feel a peculiar interest in the perusal of it, by considering Adam "as the figure of him who was to come."

Having, in the last Lecture, attempted a delineation of the life of the first man, according as it is transmitted to us in the Holy Scriptures, we proceed in prosecution of our plan, to institute, in a few particulars, a comparison between Adam and Christ; between the federal head and representative of the human race, and the covenant head and representative of the church. But let us previously observe wherein the first man differs from, and wherein he resembles all other men, who have descended from him by ordinary generation.

First, In the manner of his production. Other men arrive at their maturity, such as it is, by slow and insensible degrees ; they make a progress through infancy, childhood, and youth, to man's estate ; Adam was created perfect at once ; the moment he began to exist, he existed in all the dignity and strength of reason and intelligence. All other men are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity ; he came from the hands of his Creator, holy and blameless, the Son of God.—The mental powers of the wisest and most intelligent of mankind, his sons, are narrow and contracted ; we know but

a few things, and these imperfectly: the whole world of nature was an open volume to his understanding. Since the fall, men were born into the world with the seeds of decay and dissolution in the constitution and frame of their nature; but Adam was created incorruptible, immortal. The property and power of the greatest of his posterity is cramped and confined; limited by mountains, rivers, and seas; liable to be encroached upon, disputed, invaded, taken away: but the dominion of the first man was uncontrolled, his authority was indisputable, his property universal; the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, all, all were put under his feet. But Adam, fallen and lost, is just what all his hapless children are; like them, a slave to divers lusts and passions; like them, liable to disease and death; like them, a prey to sorrow, fear, and remorse; like them, a child of wrath, an heir of hell; and like them, to be recovered, restored, re-established, only by the mercy of God, and through the atoning blood of a Saviour:—and how that Saviour was typified or held forth to the world, by the person, character, and relative connections of Adam, is to be the subject of the remaining part of this Discourse.

Adam, perhaps, was not himself aware, that he was in this respect fulfilling the designs of Providence. We know that many others exhibited striking types of the promised Saviour, in their persons,

offices, and actions, without being conscious that such honourable distinction was conferred upon them; and Moses, the inspired author of the history of the first man, nowhere hints, that he considered Adam, or that Adam considered himself, in this light. But to us the matter is put beyond a doubt, by one who wrote also under the inspiration of God, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who informs us, that this first man, into whose nostrils God breathed the breath of life, and who thereby became a living soul, was "the type or figure of him that was to come." Rom. v. 14. And in many other places, in his Epistles, he shows us wherein the resemblance consists. Following him, therefore, and the other Sacred Writers of the New Testament, as our guides, we observe, ~


First, that Adam typified Christ, as being in a peculiar sense the *Son* of God. The Evangelist Luke, in tracing the natural pedigree of our Saviour, ascends step by step from Son to Father, till he comes to the first progenitor of all, "who was," says he, "the Son of God:" that is, his immediate offspring, deriving his existence without any interposition, from the great Source of being. And what saith the Scripture concerning the Messiah? "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Psalm ii. 7. And when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, "And let all the angels of God worship him." Heb. i. 6.

As the manner in which Adam was produced

was new and unexampled, so the conception and birth of Christ were "a new thing in the earth:" the former was created of dust from the ground, the later formed by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of a virgin. But Adam the Son of God, though made in the likeness of his Creator, expressed that divine image only externally, as the coin exhibits the image and impress of the sovereign: whereas Christ the Son of God displayed "the brightness of his Father's glory," and bore "the express image of his person." Adam the son of God was produced in time, on the sixth day of the creation, after all the other works of God were finished: but Christ the Son of God, the eternal *wisdom* of the everlasting Father, thus speaks of himself, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning "of his way, before his works of old. I was set "up from everlasting, from the beginning, ~~or~~ ever "the earth was. When there were no depths, I "was brought forth: when there were no fountains "abounding with water. Before the mountains "were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: "while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the "fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the "world: when he prepared the heavens I was "there: when he set a compass upon the ~~earth~~ "the depth: when he established the clouds ab~~ove~~ "when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: "when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters "should not pass his commandment: when he ap-

“pointed the foundations of the earth: then I was
“by him, as one brought up with him: and I was
“daily his delight, and rejoicing always before
“him: rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth,
“and my delights were with the sons of men.”
Prov. viii. 22—31.

Secondly, the constitution of Adam's nature prefigured the *person* of Christ. In Adam, an immaterial immortal spirit was united to a material earthly body, to constitute one perfect, living man; in Christ, the human nature was united to the divine, to constitute one perfect life-giving Saviour. The one a mystery of nature, the other a mystery of grace. The one, though incomprehensible, yet certainly *known* by every man to be true; the other, though incomprehensible, yet by every Christian *believed* to be true.

Thirdly, the paternal relation which Adam bears to all the human race, beautifully represents to us Jesus the Son of God, as the spiritual father of all them that believe. The first man, Adam, says the text, was made “a living soul,” that is, the source of a natural life, to them who had it not before; the last Adam was made “a quickening spirit,” that is, the giver and restorer of a spiritual and divine life,  who having lost it, were “dead in trespasses and sins.” The water in the conduit will rise to the level of its fountain, but can never mount higher. Thus Adam can communicate only what he was, and what he had himself; being therefore of the earth, earthly, he could only propagate an earthly

existence ; but the second man, being the Lord from Heaven, can, and does, make his spiritual offspring “ partakers of a divine nature.” As every man, upon coming into the world of nature, the instant he draws the breath of life, bears the image of the first man whom God created ; so from Jesus Christ, the progenitor of them who believe, all who are regenerated, or born into the world of grace, derive their spiritual existence, and bear the image of him, from whom the whole family of Heaven and earth is named. But Adam is the remote, not the immediate father of our flesh ; whereas Christ is the immediate source of spiritual light and life to all those “ who are born, “ not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of “ the will of man, but of God.” John i. 13.

Fourthly, Adam and Christ bear a striking resemblance in respect of *dominion* and *sovereignty*. When God had created man, “ he blessed him, and said “ unto him, Have dominion over the fish of the sea, “ and over the fowl of the air, and over every living “ thing that moveth upon the earth.” “ Thou hast “ made him,” says the Psalmist, “ a little lower than “ the angels : and hast crowned him with glory and “ honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over “ the works of thy hands : thou hast put all things “ under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the “ beasts of the field ; the fowl of the air, and the “ fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through “ the paths of the seas.” Psalm viii. 5—8. And Christ the Lord, even in the days of his flesh, while he yet dwelt among men, not only possessed, but

exercised, an unlimited authority over the whole world of nature, over things visible, and things invisible. The prince of the power of the air fled at his command: the boisterous elements heard and obeyed his word: disease, and death, and the grave, fulfilled his pleasure. How much more justly, after his resurrection from the dead, when “declared the “Son of God with power,” could he say of himself, “All power is given unto me, in Heaven and “in earth?” Hear the Apostle also concerning Him, “God hath highly exalted Him, and given him a “name, which is above every name: That at the “name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things “in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under “the earth: And that every tongue should confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the “Father.” Phil. ii. 9—11. *We* see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. “And he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.” The sovereignty of Adam, however, was derived, dependant, limited, and it might be forfeited: and his history, and our own experience feelingly assure us, “that, being in honour he continued not;” that the crown is fallen from his head, and the sceptre dropt from his hand. His derived authority was withdrawn by him who bestowed it; his dependant power was checked and curbed, because he had abused it; his limited empire was reduced to nothing, because he presumed to affect equality with his Creator; and having re-

ceived dominion under a condition, failing in the condition, he forfeits his throne. But the sovereignty of Christ is inherent, independent, unlimited, and everlasting. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom:" and the Son himself saith, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." John x. 28—30.

Again, the sacred and pure matrimonial union established in Paradise between Adam and Eve, was intended to prefigure the mysterious union, the pure and reciprocal affection of Christ and his Church: in which also we follow the Apostle of the Gentiles in his Epistle to the Ephesians, ch. v. 23, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that

“ it should be holy, and without blemish. We are
“ members of his body, of his flesh, and of his
“ bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father
“ and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and
“ they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mys-
“ tery; but I speak concerning Christ and the
“ church.”

Finally, the whole tenor of Scripture teaches us to consider Adam, the first of men, as the covenant head and representative of all his posterity, according to the order and course of nature; and Jesus Christ the Lord, as the federal head and representative of all his redeemed, according to the election of grace. “ For since by man came death, by man
“ came also the resurrection of the dead.” “ For
“ as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be
“ made alive.” “ By one man sin entered into the
“ world, and death by sin; and so death passed
“ upon all men, for that all have sinned.” And “ if
“ by one man’s offence, death reigned by one, much
“ more they which receive abundance of grace, and
“ of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by
“ one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of
“ one, judgment came upon all men to condemna-
“ tion; even so by the righteousness of one, the free
“ gift came upon all men unto justification of life.
“ For as by one man’s disobedience, many were
“ made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall
“ many be made righteous.” Rom. v. 17—19.

But whatever admits of comparison, by bearing resemblance, must likewise admit of contrast, on ac-

count of dissimilitude: for what so like, as to be undistinguishable? What two persons are so much the same, as not to exhibit, to the least discerning eye, characteristical marks of difference? And indeed, the very particulars wherein the first and second Adam coincide, evince the infinite superiority of the one above the other, as well as those circumstances which could not possibly be in common between them.

Adam was assaulted of the wicked one, by a slight temptation; yielded; and fell: Christ was tempted of the Devil, by repeated, vigorous, and well-conducted attacks; resisted to the last; and overcame. Adam in Paradise, became guilty, and miserable, and liable to death: Christ passed through a corrupted world, lived in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation, but preserved unspotted innocence; "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips." Adam, by one offence, became guilty of the whole law, poured contempt upon it, and transmitted his crime, together with the punishment of it, to all mankind: Christ, by a complete obedience, "magnified the law, and made it honourable," approved himself unto God, and conveys the merit of his obedience and sufferings to all them that believe, for their justification and acceptance with God. Adam, aspiring to a condition superior to that in which his Maker placed him, not only failed to obtain what he aimed at, but also lost that which he had; desiring to be as God, to know good and evil, he acquired indeed the fatal knowledge of

evil, but lost the knowledge of good which he already possessed; and sinking himself, drags down a devoted world with him: whereas Christ, for the voluntary abasement of himself, is exalted to “the right hand of the Majesty on high,” “for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour,” and “lifted up on the cross, draws all men unto him.” The moment we exist, in virtue of our relation to the first Adam, we die for an offence we could not commit; so, we no sooner become united to the second Adam through faith in his blood, than we become partakers of a spiritual and divine nature, and heirs of everlasting life, in virtue of a righteousness not our own. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” In Adam, we are condemned for one sin: in Christ, we are justified from many offences. The History of Adam represents to us a garden with one tree of life amidst many that were good for food, and near to one that was pregnant with death: the Revelation of Jesus Christ exhibits to us a Paradise, all whose trees are of one sort; whose fruit is life-giving, whose very leaves are salutary; trees of life which know no decay, never disappoint the gatherer’s hope, never feel the approach of-winter.

Genesis presents to our trembling, astonished sight, “Cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turn every way to keep the way of the tree of life.” The *Apocalypse* discloses to our delighted eyes, angels ministering to them who are the heirs of sal-

vation ; and our ravished ears hear these glad accents bursting from amidst the excellent glory: “ To
“ him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree
“ of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of
“ God.” “ Let him that is athirst come: and
“ whosoever will, let him take the water of life
“ freely.”

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you
all. Amen.

LECTURE IV.

HEBREWS XI. 4.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

A STATE of innocence was apparently of short duration. The history of it contains but a very few particulars. To plunge the human race into guilt and ruin was the work only of a moment: but to restore mankind to life and happiness employed depth of design to contrive; length of time to mature and unfold; and irresistible force to execute. The history of the world is, in truth, the history of redemption. For all the dealings of Divine Providence with men, directly or by implication, immediately or remotely, point out and announce a Saviour. To our first parents, immediately upon the fall, a promise was given, in general, indeed, but not in obscure terms, of deliverance and recovery, by one who should be in a peculiar and proper sense, "the seed of the woman." And it is far from being unreasonable to suppose, that the skins employed to cover the shame of our guilty first parents, were taken from victims slain by divine appointment; who by the shedding of their blood were to typify

the great atonement, styled in Scripture, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." But admitting this to be merely conjecture, we have the authority of God himself to affirm, that the immediate descendants of Adam offered such sacrifices, and looked in faith and hope to such a propitiation: "For by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." The History, Character, and Conduct of these Two Brothers, from the materials furnished us in Scripture, are to be the subject of this Lecture.

Adam, with the partner of his guilt and of his future fortunes, being expelled from Eden, and hurled from all his native honours, enters on the possession of a globe, which was cursed for his sake. He feels that he is fallen from a spiritual and divine life, from righteousness and innocence; that he is become liable to death; nay, by the very act of disobedience, that he really died to goodness and happiness. But the sentence itself which condemns him, gives him full assurance, that his natural life, though forfeited, was to be reprieved; that he should live to labour; to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow; and not only so, but that he should be the means of communicating that natural life to others; for that Eve should become a mother, though the pain and sorrow of conception and child-bearing were to be greatly multiplied. In process of time

she accordingly brings forth a son; and pain and sorrow are no more remembered, for joy that a man-child is born into the world. What she thought and felt upon this occasion, we learn from what she said, and from the name she gave her new-born son. With a heart overflowing with gratitude, she looks up to God, who had not only spared and prolonged *her* life, but made her the joyful mother of a living child; and who in multiplying her sorrow, had much more abundantly multiplied her comfort. Ease that succeeds anguish is doubly relished and enjoyed. Kindness from one whom we have offended falls with a weight pleasingly oppressive upon the mind. Some interpreters, and not without reason, suppose, that she considered the son given her, as the promised seed, who should bruise the head of the serpent; and they read her self-gratulatory exclamation thus, "I have gotten *the man* "from the Lord." And how soothing to the maternal heart must have been the hope of deliverance and relief for herself, and triumph over her bitter enemy, by means of the son of her own bowels! How fondly doth she dream of repairing the ruin which her frailty had brought upon her husband and family, by this "first-born of many brethren!" The name she gives him signifies "possessed," or a "possession." She flatters herself that she has now got something she can call her own; and even the loss of Paradise seems compensated by a dearer inheritance. If there be a portion more tenderly cherished, or more highly prized than another, it is

that of which David speaks, Psalm cxxvii. 3—5. “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord : and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man ; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them : they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” But alas ! blind to futurity, with how many sorrows was this “possession,” so exultingly triumphed in, about to pierce the fond maternal breast ! How unlike are the forebodings and wishes of parental tenderness and partiality, to the destinations of Providence, and the discoveries which time brings to light ! “And she again bare his brother Abel.” The word denotes *vanity*, or a breath of air. Was this name given him through the unreasonable prejudice and unjust preference of a partial mother ? Or was it an unintentional prediction of the brevity of his life, and of the lamentable manner of his death ? But the materials of which life is composed, are not so much its days, and months, and years ; as works of piety, and mercy, and justice, or their opposites. He dies in full maturity, who has lived to God and eternity, at whatever period, and in whatever manner he may be cut off. That life is short, though extended to a thousand years, which is disfigured with vice, which is devoted to the pursuits of time merely, and at the close of which the unhappy man is found unreconciled to God.

Behold this pair of brothers, then, growing in wisdom and in stature ; gladdening their parents’

hearts. They arrive at the age of reason, of vigour, of activity ; they feel the law of God and nature upon them. Though the heirs of empire, they must labour for their subsistence, “ Abel was a keeper of “ sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” The earth will no longer spontaneously yield her increase. The clods must be turned up, and the seed must be cast into the furrow, through the care, foresight, and industry of man, else in vain will the Heavens shed their influence; and in vain will the blessing of the Most High be expected. That cattle may furnish either the fleece for clothing, or milk for food, they must be protected from inclement seasons, and ravenous beasts ; they must be conducted to proper pasture, and provided with water from the brook. And this is the humble origin of the first employments which occupied our elder brethren in a state of nature. And here it is observable, that the different dispositions of the brothers may be traced in the occupations which they followed. Pious and contemplative, Abel tends his flock : his profession affords more retirement, and more leisure, for meditation ; and the very nature of his charge forms him to vigilance, to providence, and to sympathy. His prosperity and success seem to flow immediately, and only, from the hands of God. Cain, more worldly, and selfish, betakes himself to husbandry ; a work of greater industry and art : the necessary implements of which suppose the prior invention of sundry branches of manufacture ; and in whose operations, and their effects, art blending with na-

ture, would claim at least her full proportion of merit and importance. But it is not the *occupation* which has merit or demerit; the man who exercises it is the object of censure or of praise. It is not the husbandry of Cain, but wicked Cain the husbandman that we blame; it is not the shepherd's life, but good Abel the shepherd that we esteem. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof: and the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering." What is any condition, any employment, unconnected with, unsupported, unadorned by religion! How wretched a creature is the mere citizen of this world, whose views, pursuits, and enjoyments, all terminate in time! The man who sees not his comforts and his successes as coming from the hand of God; and whose heart rises not in gratitude to the giver of all good, is a stranger to the choicest ingredient in the cup of prosperity. But can God, the great God, stand in need of such things as these? "Is not every beast of the forest his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills?" Yes, verily: religion was not instituted for the sake of God, but of man: for man cannot be profitable to his Maker, as he that is wise, and good, and pious, may be unto himself. Religion is pressed upon us by the very law of our nature; and it is absolutely necessary to human happiness.

Cain observes the fruit of the earth arrive at their maturity. He knows that all his care and skill, without the interposition of Heaven, could not have produced a single grain of corn. He had observed the seed which he cast into the ground, dying, in order to be quickened; he saw from putrefaction a fresh stem springing up, and bearing thirty, sixty, an hundred fold; and he discerned a power more than human conducting this wonderful process. Of the first and best, therefore, he brings an offering unto the Lord; not to enrich his Maker, but to do honour to himself. Abel's flocks and herds likewise, through the blessing of the Almighty, increase and multiply; he adores the hand that makes his wealth; and presents the firstlings of his flock to the Lord. But, alas! his offering, in order to be accepted, must bleed and die. The innocent lamb which he had tended with so much care, which he had fed from his hand, and had carried in his bosom, must by his hand be slain, must find no compassion from the tender shepherd's heart, when piety demands him—it must be consumed to ashes before his eyes. “And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering. But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect.” What made the difference? Not the nature and quality of the things offered, but the disposition of the offerers. Our text illustrates and explains the passage in Genesis, “By FAITH Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Cain came before God as a righteous man; Abel as a sinner. Cain brought an of-

fering of acknowledgment ; Abel a propitiatory sacrifice. Cain's gift bespeaks a grateful heart ; Abel's a contrite spirit. Cain eyes the goodness of God ; Abel acknowledges his mercy and long-suffering. Cain says, " Lord, I thank thee for all thy benefits towards me ;" Abel confesses, " Lord, I am unworthy the least of thy favours." Cain rejoices in the world as a goodly portion ; Abel, by faith, discerns and expects a better inheritance. Cain approaches, trusting in an imperfect righteousness of his own, and departs unjustified ; Abel draws nigh, depending on the perfect righteousness of a Mediator, and goes away righteous in the sight of God.

In what manner the divine approbation and displeasure were expressed, we are not informed ; whether by a celestial fire seizing and consuming the one offering, and leaving the other untouched ; or by a voice from Heaven, declaratory of the mind of God. But we are assured that it was sufficiently notified to the parties themselves. On Abel, undoubtedly, it had the effect which a sense of the favour of God will always produce upon a good mind, a mind which esteems the loving kindness of the Most High more than life ; sweet complacency and composure of spirit, " the peace of God which passeth all understanding." On Cain it produceth a very different effect ; he was very wroth, " and his countenance fell." Men are often angry when they ought to be grieved ; and remorse for their own unworthiness frequently becomes resentment against their innocent neigh-

bours; and not seldom it changes into sullenness, insolence, and rebellion against God himself. Observe the goodness and condescension of God; he vouchsafes to reason with, to warn, and to admonish this peevish, petulant man; and gives encouragement to a better temper and behaviour—"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" He promises to support him in his right of primogeniture, unworthy as he was—"To thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him;"—but at the same time he points out the danger of persevering in impiety, and of prosecuting his resentments—"If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." But the soul, of which envy, malice, and revenge have taken possession, is lost to the better feelings of human nature; is deaf to remonstrance, and insensible of kindness. The innocent are simple and unsuspecting; intending no evil, they fear none. Cain, it would appear from the letter of the narration, and the scene where the action is laid, decoyed his brother into solitude, under the mask of familiarity and friendship, "he *talked* with him," they were in the *field*. What a horrid aggravation of his guilt! A deed of violence! Murder! A good man's, a brother's murder! Deliberately resolved on, craftily conducted, remorselessly executed! Was man's first disobedience a slight evil, which introduced such desperate wickedness into the world; which transformed **man** into the most savage of beasts! "He rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." Now was death for the first time seen: and seen in

his ghastliest form! Death before the time! The death of piety and goodness! Death inflicted by violence, and preceded by pain! Death embittered to the sufferer by reflecting on the hand from which it came; the hand of a brother, the hand which should have supported and protected him, which should have barred the door against the murderer, not borne the fatal instrument itself! At length the feeble eyes of the martyr close in peace; and the pain of bleeding wounds, and the pangs of fraternal cruelty are felt no more. "The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it." The spirit returns to God, to see his unclouded face, formerly seen through the medium of natural objects, and of religious services; to understand, and to enjoy the great mystery of the atonement, hitherto known only in a figure. Happy Abel, thus early delivered from the sins and sorrows of a vain world! And thus death, at whatever season, in whatever form, and from whatever quarter it comes, is always unspeakably great gain to a good man.

Such was the life, and such the untimely end of "righteous Abel," for so our blessed Lord himself styles him, who thus fell a martyr to religion. The remainder of Cain's history; the short view given us of the character of his descendants, together with the birth of Seth, *given and appointed* of God to preserve the sacred line, to propagate the holy seed, in place of Abel, whom Cain slew, will, with the permission of God, furnish matter for another Lec-

ture. Let us conclude the present, by setting up the character of Abel as an object of esteem, and a pattern for imitation.

Faith in God, and in a Saviour to come; and the righteousness which is of God by faith, are the leading and striking features of this portrait; and by these, "being dead, he yet speaketh," or if you choose to adopt the marginal reading, "is yet spoken of." It is a desirable thing to enjoy a good name while we live, and to be remembered with kindness after we are dead. But reputation is the gift of others; it is often gained without merit, and lost without a crime. Whereas true goodness is a real, unalienable possession; it cleaves to us in death; it accompanies us into the world of spirits; it instructs the world while we live; it speaks from the grave; it shines in the presence of God in Heaven. Here, my friends, it is lawful and honourable to aspire. Permit others to get before you in wealth or in fame; grudge not to your neighbour the superiority in wit, or strength, or beauty: but yield to none in piety, in purity, in faith, in charity; aim at the highest honours of the Christian name; be humble, and be every thing.

Salvation, men and brethren, has, from the beginning, flowed in one and the same channel. There was not one gospel to the antediluvian, and another to the postdiluvian world; one method of redemption to the Jews, and another to the Gentiles; but "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Abel, Abraham, Moses,

David, Simeon, Paul, and all who have been or shall be saved, lived and died in the faith of Christ. "Neither is there any salvation in any other; for "there is none other name under Heaven given "among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts iv. 12. This therefore is the great commandment of God to us in these days of meridian light and glory, namely, "that we should believe on the "name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one "another."

Was Abel a type of Christ, as well as a believer in him? The Scripture indeed saith it not expressly; but surely, without straining, we may discern some striking marks of resemblance. What saith Moses? "Abel was a keeper of sheep." What saith Christ? "I am the good shepherd: the good "shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." What did Abel? "He through faith brought of the "firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof, an "offering unto the Lord." What did Christ? "Through the eternal Spirit he offered himself "without spot to God." Were Abel's days cut short by the hand of violence? So "Messiah, the "Prince, was cut off, but not for himself." Was Abel hated of, and slain by his brother? Christ "was despised and rejected" of his own, and died by the treachery of a familiar friend in whom he trusted, and by the cruelty of those who were his brethren according to the flesh. Did the blood of Abel cry to God from the ground, for vengeance on the head of him who shed it? Ah, with what

oppressive weight has the blood of Jesus fallen, and how heavily does it still lie on the heads of them, and of their children, who with wicked hands crucified and slew him ! Could the blood of Abel atone for his sin ? No : but the blood of Christ cleanseth him, and every believer, from all sin. Yet Abel died as a righteous man, Christ as a sinner. Abel, a guilty creature, was justified and accepted through an imputed righteousness ; Christ, who was “ holy, “ harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners,” was condemned and suffered, because “ the Lord “ laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Abel suffered death once for all ; the body of Christ was “ offered “ once for all,” and by that one sacrifice, “ he hath “ for ever perfected them that are sanctified.” But we pursue the similitude and the contrast no farther. May God bless what has been said. Amen. And to his holy name be praise.

LECTURE V.

1 JOHN III. 11, 12.

For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother; and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

IT is a pleasant task to attend the footsteps of the wise and good, through the thorny maze of human life: to draw nigh with the devout to the altar of God: to learn patience of the meek, compassion of the merciful, and kindness of the generous; to love and admire them in life, and to regret them in death. But ah! how painful to trace the progress, and to mark the appearances of "the carnal mind, "which is enmity against God," and hatred to man, from the first conception of an ill design, to the final execution of a deed of horror! "Lust, having conceived, bringeth forth sin; and sin, when finished, bringeth forth death." Nevertheless, it is highly important, that even objects of detestation should be placed before the eyes of men; that sin should be viewed in her native loathsomeness and deformity, to excite, if possible, aversion and disgust. To direct men in the journey of life, it is necessary to erect beacons, the admonition of hidden

dangers and death ; as well as to set up indexes, to point out the right path. The two first men who were born into the world, are designed of Providence to answer this valuable purpose to those who should come after them. Abel, though dead, continues to instruct men in the excellency, amiableness, and importance of true religion ; Cain stands to all generations a fearful example of ungovernable passion, hurrying a man on to blood, and plunging him into despair. Having considered the former as a pattern for imitation, we are now to consider the history of the latter, as affording an useful and seasonable warning to look to ourselves, “ lest we also “ be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Cain has now accomplished his bloody purpose. His envied, hated rival is now removed out of sight : the virtues of his brother no longer reproach him : Abel stands no more in the way, to intercept the rays of the favour of God, or of man. Is he not now then at rest ? No eye saw him commit the murder. And if it were known, who shall call him to account ? No eye saw him ! Yes, the eye of Cain saw him : yes, the eye of God saw him : hence the whole earth becomes all eye to behold him, all tongue to accuse him. Who shall call him to account ? That shall Cain ; his own conscience shall avenge the murder : that shall the hand of every man ; fly whither he will ; for every man is concerned to destroy him, who makes light of the life of another : that shall God, from whom he cannot fly. Revenge, like a “ devilish engine,” recoils on him

that employs it; or like the flame of Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, catches hold of, and destroys the ministers of vengeance, not the objects of it.

The mournful tidings must soon reach the ears of the afflicted parents. What were now thy feelings, Eve, when he, who was expected to be a Saviour, turns out a destroyer? Which is the heavier affliction, a son prematurely and violently cut off; or a son living to present an object of horror and detestation to their eyes? A pious child dead is, beyond all controversy, a *possession* infinitely preferable to a profligate alive. Alas! what shall they do? To overlook the murder is to become partakers in the guilt of it; to punish the murderer, as justice demands, is to render themselves childless. Ah! how do the difficulties and distress of their fallen estate increase upon guilty men every day! The cause, which was too hard for Adam to determine, God takes into his own hand. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?" Offences committed in secret, and offenders, whose power and station bid defiance to earthly tribunals, fall properly under the immediate cognizance of Heaven. Behold the throne is set, and the judgment opened. How meek and gentle is God with this murderer? He would draw confession from his mouth, not as a snare, but as an indication of contrition. The end which God has in view, in making inquiry after blood, is, not the conviction and punishment; but the conviction, pardon, and recovery of the criminal. What a question, "Where is thy

“brother?” put by God himself to the wretch whose hands were yet reeking with a brother’s blood? What heart, hardened through sin, dictated the reply, “I know not, am I my brother’s keeper?” Is this the eldest hope of the first human pair? Is he not rather the first-born of that accursed being, who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning? “I know not:” Falsehood must be called in to cover that wickedness which we are ashamed or afraid to avow. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” How dreadful is the progress of vice! How crime leads on to crime! Envy begets malice; malice inspires revenge; revenge hurries on to blood; blood-guiltiness seeks shelter under untruth, and untruth attempts to support itself by insolence, assurance, and pride: and haughtiness of spirit is but one step from destruction. Ah, little do men know, when they indulge one evil thought, or venture on one unwarrantable action, what the issue is to be! They vainly flatter themselves it is in their power to stop when they please. But passion, like a fiery and unmanageable steed in the hands of an unskilful rider, by one inconsiderate stroke of the spur, may be excited to such a pitch of fury, as no skill can tame, no force restrain; but both horse and rider are hurried together down the precipice, and perish in their rage.

The milder, and more indirect admonitions and reproofs of God’s word and providence being misunderstood, slighted, or defied, justice is concerned, and necessity requires, to speak in plainer language,

and to bring the charge directly home : and that severity is most awful, which was preceded by gentleness, patience, and long-suffering. God at length awakes to vengeance ; “ and he said, What hast thou done ? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.” And mark how every creature arms itself in the cause of God. The dead earth is represented as acquiring sensibility, and refusing to cover blood : the silent ground becomes vocal, and loudly accuses the criminal ; the stones of the field are at war with him who has made God his foe : nay, the earth is made not only the accuser, but the punisher of the guilty ; because of this new transgression it falls under a heavier curse. Adam, for his offence, was doomed to eat bread with the sweat of his brow ; he was doomed to labour, yet to labour in hope of increase : but Cain shall spend his strength for nought, and in vain. The ground shall present greater rigidity to the hand of cultivation : shall cast out the seed thrown into it, or consume and destroy it ; or at best produce a lean and scanty crop. Cain and the earth are to be mutually cursed to each other. *It* seems to tremble under, and shrink from the feet of a murderer ; it refuses henceforth to yield unto him her strength, and considers him as a monstrous, misshapen birth, of which she is ashamed, and which she wishes to destroy. *He* considers it as an unnatural mother, whom no pains can mollify, no submission reconcile. “ A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.” When the mind is

changed, every thing changes with it : when a man is at discord with himself, he is eternally from home. The spacious world, Cain's hereditary domain, is become a vast solitude ; of a home it is turned into a place of exile. The person whom all men shun is every where a stranger ; he who is smitten of his own conscience is continually surrounded with enemies.

The same principle which engages men in criminal enterprises, in the hope of impunity, throws them into despair, upon the denunciation of punishment. As they formerly expected much higher satisfaction from the execution of their wicked purposes, than the most successful villany ever could bestow ; so now, their own guilty minds outrun the awards of justice itself ; and the awakened conscience does ample vengeance upon the offender at length, and it amply vindicates the cause both of God and man. This is strikingly exemplified in the case of Cain. His recent boldness and insolence are a strong contrast to his present dejection and terror. He now sinks under the apprehension of intolerable chastisements, and forebodes greater evils than his sentence denounced. His banishment he considers as far from being the greatest of the calamities of his condition ; he feels himself excluded, hidden from the gracious presence of God ; and, deserted of his Maker, liable to fall by the hand of every assailant. But God remembers mercy in the midst of anger : and the life which he himself was graciously pleased to spare, no one else

must, on any pretence whatever, presume to take away. He only who can bestow life has a right to dispose of it.

Ye over-curious inquirers, who must needs be informed of every thing, what does it concern you to know, by *what* mark God distinguished Cain, to prevent his being killed by any one who might take upon himself to be the avenger of blood? Speculation and conjecture, which with some pass for illustration and knowledge, are not the objects of these exercises; but whatever assists faith, whatever supports a sound morality, whatever conveys real information, inspires a taste for goodness, represses inordinate and sinful desire; whatever teaches gratitude and love to God, and good-will to men, that we would carefully observe, and earnestly inculcate. As it is no part of our intention to wander into the regions of speculation, under a pretence of elucidating the sacred history it is still less so to enter the lists of controversy. Your Lecturer has, no doubt, his opinion and prejudices, like other men: his prejudices, however, he is confident to say, are on the side of truth, and virtue, and religion: his opinions, he has no inclination dogmatically to propose; he neither wishes to make a secret of them; nor expects any one, much less the world, implicitly to adopt them. He is conscious of a desire to do good; not over anxious about fame; happy in the affection of many friends, and unconscious of having given cause to any good man to be his enemy. Forgive a digression, suggested by the occasion, not rambled into through design; proceed-

ing, not from the desire a man has to speak of himself, but from a wish, by doing it once for all, to cut off all future occasion of speaking in, or of the first person. We return to the history.

"It shall come to pass," says guilty trembling Cain, "that every one that findeth me shall slay me." This is one of the many passages of Scripture, which the enemies of religion have laid hold of, and held forth, as contradictory to other parts of Revelation, in the view of invalidating and destroying the whole. Here, they allege, Moses is inconsistent with himself; in deriving the whole human race from the common root of Adam, and at the same time supposing the world so populous at the time of Abel's murder, as to excite in Cain a well-grounded apprehension of the public resentment and punishment of his crimes. Either, say they, there were other men and women created at the same time with, or before Adam and Eve; or else Cain's fears are groundless and absurd. A learned and ingenious critic has taken the trouble to refute this objection, by instituting a calculation, founded on obvious probabilities at least, by which it appears, that at the time of Abel's murder, the world was sufficiently peopled, on the Mosaic supposition, that all mankind descended from Adam, to render the public justice an object of well-grounded apprehension to guilty Cain. We pretend not to assert, that the calculation of a modern author is demonstration of a fact so remote: if it be probable, it is sufficient for our purpose, that of doing away one of

the cavils of infidelity. The birth of Seth is fixed, by the history, in the one hundredth and thirtieth year of Adam: it is therefore reasonable to place the death of Abel two years earlier, or near it; that is, in the one hundred and twenty-eighth year of the world. "Now though we should suppose," says the calculator (Saurin), "that Adam and Eve had no other sons in the year of the world one hundred and twenty-eight but Cain and Abel, it must be allowed that they had daughters, who might early marry with those two sons. I require no more than the descendants of these two, to make a very considerable number of men upon the earth, in the said year one hundred and twenty-eight. For supposing them to have been married in the nineteenth year of the world, they might easily have had each of them eight children in the twenty-fifth year. In twenty-five years more, the fiftieth of the world, their descendants in a direct line would be sixty-four persons. In the seventy-fifth year, at the same rate, they would amount to five hundred and twelve. In the one hundredth year, to four thousand and ninety-six: in the one hundred and twenty-fifth year, to thirty-two thousand seven hundred and sixty-eight." Now, if to this calculation we add, the high degree of probability that Adam had many more sons, besides those mentioned in the record; that families were generally more numerous than the supposition states; that simple manners, rural

employments, temperature of climate, and largeness of room, are circumstances inconceivably more favourable to population, than modern facts, and European customs give us any idea of, we shall have no reason to think it strange, that Cain, under the pressure of conscious guilt, and harrowed with fear, which always both multiplies and magnifies objects far beyond their real number and size, should be alarmed and intimidated at the numbers of mankind, who, he supposed, were ready, and were concerned, to execute vengeance upon him. "He went out," the history informs us, "from the presence of the Lord." Some interpreters have, from this expression, concluded, that even after the fall, God continued to reside among men, in some sacred spot adjoining to Eden, and in some sensible tokens of his gracious presence: that thither gifts and sacrifices were brought, and were there offered up; and that from thence, Cain, for his heinous transgression, was banished, and excluded from the society and privileges of the faithful. Whatever be in this, we know for certain that wicked men naturally shun God, and drive him as far from their thoughts as they can: and in the phrase of Scripture, God is said to "hide his face" from wicked men, "to turn his back" upon them, "to give them up," to denote his displeasure with them. "And he dwelt," it is added, "in the land of Nod." It is the same word which is rendered in the twelfth and fourteenth verses, a *vagabond*. Why our translators, in the two former verses, give the meaning, or

import of the word, and in the sixteenth verse the letters of it merely, is not easily comprehensible. Let it be *translated* throughout, and the sense is perfectly clear, and all ground of idle inquiry is taken away. In the twelfth verse, God denounces his punishment, Thou shalt not die, but be *Nod*, a vagabond in the earth. In the fourteenth verse, Cain recognises the justice of his sentence, and bewails it; "I shall be *Nod*, a vagabond in the earth." And in the sixteenth, Moses gives us the history of its being put in execution, "he went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of *Nod*," a vagabond, flying from place to place, skulking in corners, shunning the haunts of men, pursued incessantly by the remorseful pangs, and tormenting apprehensions of an ill conscience. Though you remove all external danger, yet "the wicked is as the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt:" "he is a *Magor missabib*," "a terror to himself." To live in perpetual fear, to live at discord with a man's self, is not to live at all.

The posterity of Cain is represented, in Scripture, as the first to build a city. The mutual fears and wants of men drive them into society; put them upon raising bulwarks, devising restraints, cultivating the arts which afford the means of defence against attacks from without, or which amuse and divert within. The invention of music, and of manufactures in brass and iron, are, accordingly, likewise as-

cribed to his descendants. When men are got together in great multitudes, as their different talents will naturally whet each other to the invention of new arts of life, and the cultivation of science; so their various passions, mingling with, and acting upon one another, will necessarily produce unheard of disorders and irregularities. Hence, in *Enoch*, the city of Cain, and in *Lamech*, the sixth from Cain, we first read of that invasion of the rights of mankind, *polygamy*, or the marrying more wives than one. In a great city, as there will be many who omit doing their duty altogether, so there will be some, who will take upon them to do more than duty prescribes. The unvarying nearness, or equality, which Providence has preserved from the creation of the world, of male and female births, is full demonstration, independent of all statute law, that the Governor of the World means every man to have his own wife, and every woman her own husband; that to neglect his intention in this matter, is an attempt to counteract his Providence; and that to outrun it is an effort, equally vain, presumptuous, wicked, and absurd, to mend his work.

How long Cain lived, and when, or where, and in what manner he died, we have no information. And little satisfaction can it yield, to attend the footsteps of a wicked and unhappy man, through a life of guilt and remorse, to a latter end of horror. Better for him he had never been born, than to have lived a sorrow to her that bare him, detested and shunned of all men, “a fugitive and a vaga-

“bond in the earth,” a burthen and a terror to himself. Better for him his name had never been mentioned among posterity, than to have it transmitted to latest generations, stained with a brother’s blood. But it is of high importance to know, that God, in his good time, supplied the place of righteous Abel, preserved alive the holy seed, and secured a succession, which should at length terminate in that “promised seed,” who was “to bruise the serpent’s head,” who was “to destroy the works of the devil.” “And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth; for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed, instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.”

This wicked man’s history is a loud admonition to all, to watch over their spirits; and carefully to guard against the first emotions of anger, envy, hatred, contempt, malice, or revenge. And the words of Jesus Christ confirm and enforce the solemn warning, “I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say unto his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” Matt. v. 22—24.

Hold thy bloody hand, son, daughter of murder-

rous Cain! why should a brother, a sister fall by it! That furious look is a dagger; that unkind word has made the blood, the heart's blood to follow it. *Daughter* of murderous Cain; a *female* hand armed with a sword, lifted up to slay, dipped in blood! No, she wields a more deadly weapon, she brandishes an envenomed tongue: poison more fatal than that of asps is under her lips; it is not the body that suffers, when that unruly member moves; it is the spirit, it is the spirit that bleeds: the man dies, and sees not who it was that hurt him; he perishes in the best part of himself, his good name is blasted; and what has he left worth possessing? The sight of a little *material* blood makes her faint: a dead corse terrifies and shocks her; but she can calmly, and with delight, sit down to that horrid sacrifice, a murdered, mangled reputation!

But the history, also, in its connexion, inspires holy joy and confidence in God, by representing the constant, seasonable, and suitable interpositions of his Providence, according to the various exigencies of mankind. Devils and wicked men are continually aiming at defacing his image, at marring his work; but they cannot prevail. The purposes of the divine wisdom and mercy are not to be defeated by the united efforts of earth and hell. Abel dies, but Seth starts up in his room. Jesus expires on the cross, but "through death destroys him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil." "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain."

LECTURE VI.

GENESIS, V. 24.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.

THE regular and uniform dominion of the laws of nature, or the occasional suspension and alteration of them, are equally a proof of the Being and Providence of God. Whether the sun with uninterrupted speed continues to perform his daily and annual course; or whether he “stands still in “Gibeon,” or “goes back on the dial of Ahaz;” the interposition of the Most High is equally apparent, and is equally to be adored. And why may not He, who “has appointed unto all men once to “die,” in order to make his power known, and his goodness felt, exhibit here and there an illustrious exemption from the power of the grave, and thereby vindicate his sovereign rights as the great arbiter and disposer of life and death.

To fallen Adam it was denounced, “Dust thou “art, and to dust thou shalt return?” “by one man “sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and “so death passed upon all men, for that all have “sinned:” But, behold, the mortal sentence is remitted in favour of Enoch, the seventh from Adam; behold the order of nature is altered, the decree of Heaven is dispensed with; he is “translated

“without tasting of death.” When an event, so entirely out of course, takes place, it is natural, and not unprofitable, to inquire into the causes of it; for when the issue is singular and uncommon, we justly conclude that the circumstances which led to it were likewise singular and uncommon. The Holy Scriptures afford us, but sparingly, materials for a life, which concluded so very differently from that of other men; but what they have furnished is striking and instructive.

The venerable father of the human race had now himself paid the debt of nature. The curse of the broken law had been seen and felt in the unnatural and premature death of Abel; and was at length inflicted, in the departure of Adam, at the mature age of nine hundred and thirty years. The events which had hitherto taken place from the fall, were so many successive demonstrations of the *justice* of God; under the weight of which, men were, one after another, sinking into the grave. All that *mercy* had as yet done, was to grant a reprieve of forfeited life: and death, though delayed to the thousandth year, is still bitterness in the end. We may reasonably suppose the faithful themselves to have been overwhelmed at the sight of so many vials of wrath, poured out from time to time on their guilty race: and that they were incapable of discovering the promises of favour and triumph, of life and immortality, through the obscure veil of that promise, “the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.” The sacrifice of Abel

indeed discovered a faith in God, which raised the *spirit* above the fear and the stroke of death; and good men like him would be led in their dying moments, with holy confidence and joy, to commit their departing *souls* to God, as unto a faithful Creator; but the *body* evidently returned to its dust, suffered corruption, and was dissolved. Religion accordingly furnished, as yet, but imperfectly, one of the most powerful motives which it proposes to bring men unto God, “as the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.” But at length He vouchsafes to unveil the invisible world; and shows it to be possible “for flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of God.” Within fifty-seven years from the time that Adam was laid in the dust, Enoch, without undergoing that change, passes immediately into the presence and paradise of God. And thus there was placed before the eyes of the church, and of the world, in that early period, an anticipated view and example of the final victory which the Messiah was at last to obtain over death, and all the other enemies of man’s salvation.

Enoch, however illustrious and distinguished in his latter end, as well as by the superior sanctity of his life, came into the world in the usual manner, and fulfilled the duties of the ordinary relations of human life, while he continued in it. One great branch of holy walking with God, is useful walking among men. Having, to the proper period, lived in the obedience and subjection of a son, he in due time becomes the master of a family and a father;

for Methuselah was born to him in the sixty-fifth year of his age, a period earlier than that at which any of the Patriarchs, according to the record, became a parent, except his grandfather Mahalaleel. It is not the religion of God, which withdraws, or excludes men from society; and teaches disrespect to the secular destinations of Providence, or the relative obligations and connexions of life. No, it is the religion of Satan, which would represent as impure, what God declares pure, and permits to all, enjoins upon all; it is "a seducing spirit, and a doctrine of Devils," which forbids to marry, "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth." What, is a wretched solitary monk in his cell holier than Enoch, the father of a numerous family, who pleased God, so as to be rewarded with exemption from death, and with immediate admission into the kingdom of Heaven? He who lives unconnected, wilfully contracts his sphere of being useful and of doing good; he wickedly hides his talent in the ground: he robs God, his country and his kindred, of services which they have a just right to expect from him.

Again, this holy man deserves our notice, as one of the great ancestors of the human race; as a link in the mighty chain of Providence, which was gradually bringing on that eventful period, that fulness of time, "when the first-born among many brethren," last in order of succession, but first in dignity, should come for our salvation. Enoch was

born in the year of the world six hundred and twenty-two. Adam died fifty-seven years before his translation. Of consequence they were contemporaries, or lived together, for no less a period than three hundred and eight years. Adam's whole stock of natural and divine knowledge might accordingly have been, and most probably was, communicated, by word of mouth, to Enoch, in so long a course of years: and much did he profit by a communication so important. And this, by the way, instructs us in one final cause of the longevity of the Patriarchs in the antediluvian world. As there was then no written word, no transferable record of divine truth, all religious knowledge must have been greatly marred and impaired, if not entirely lost, in the rapid lapse of generations, reduced to the present short standard of half a century. But God graciously lengthened out life then to many centuries; whereby the father was enabled to instruct his posterity of the seventh or eighth generation, in the things which he himself had received immediately from the fountain of all truth and knowledge. Thus are the dispensations of Providence suited to the necessities of mankind; thus can God remedy every inconveniency, and make up every defect, in a way peculiar to himself. But to proceed—

Enoch was an illustrious person, not only in the church, but among the heathen. Eusebius, the famous ecclesiastical historian, who flourished and wrote in the fourth century of the Christian era, quotes Eupolemus, a heathen author of credit, as

affirming, that the Babylonians consider Enoch as the author of their astrology; and allege, that he is the same who is called *Atlas* by the Greeks, who from his profound skill in natural objects, and particularly from his discoveries in astronomy, was hyperbolically said to sustain the heavens on his shoulders. The expression, "Enoch walked with God," is, in conformity to this opinion, interpreted of his close and intense application to the study of Nature, and of the great additions to the public stock of acquired knowledge, which he made, in consequence of it. That this may warrantably be supposed to constitute one branch of "walking with God," we are not disposed to deny. The study of Nature is honourable, pleasing, and improving, and "the invisible things of God" may be clearly traced in "the things that are made." But had Enoch been merely a great naturalist, a sagacious astronomer, or a profound soothsayer, he had not been transmitted to future generations by a distinction so honourable and so uncommon; nor had his history merited so much of your attention as has already been bestowed upon it. Whether he was an adept in the science of Nature or not, we know, upon the best authority, that he was a great "prophet," for Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, in his general Epistle, quotes him in that quality, in these words: "Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly

“ among them, of their ungodly deeds, which they
“ have ungodly committed, and of all their hard
“ speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken
“ against him.” Jude, 14, 15. Now it is no business of ours to inquire in what record Jude found this prophecy of Enoch; it is sufficient for our purpose that an Apostle of the Lord delivers it as such. Our purpose is not to answer the objections, and refute the cavils of unbelievers, but, humbly to attempt to illustrate, enforce, and apply Scripture truth, to those who receive the Bible as the word of God; as the guide of their faith, the source of their hope, and the rule of their life. From the prophecy itself, it is of importance to observe how early, and how powerfully the doctrine of a judgment to come was taught to the world. How clearly do those men discern, whose eyes are opened by the spirit of the living God! How vast and how profound must that intelligence be, which can communicate, even to man, the fore-knowledge of events the most remote; which revealed to Enoch, in the very infancy of the world, the awful day of its dissolution!

In this holy man it is apparent, that the grace of God's Spirit accompanied his gifts; the spirit of prophecy blended with the spirit of “ faith, and love, and of a sound mind.” Not like Balaam, who saw in prophetic vision the star of Jacob arising, but in belief shut his eyes against its light; who desecrated things to come by the inspiration of the living God, but sottishly yielded homage to them

who are no gods; who lived a prophet, but died an idolater: not like Caiaphas, who following the impulse of his own passions, and governed by the prejudice of a blinded mind, uttered a truth which he was not aware of; stumbled on a prediction which he was unknowingly, undesignedly, helping to fulfil: but Enoch, impressed with the solemn truth which he preached to others, daily improved by it himself. How apt are men to err in this respect! They earnestly covet the gifts, which are dispensed but to a few, and are not always sanctified to the possessor; while they are careless about the graces which God is ever ready to bestow upon all, and which always accompany salvation. Let me possess, O God, an humble and a charitable spirit, though with the simplicity of a child, rather than "speak with the tongue of men, or of angels," and be destitute of it.

This leads us to the interesting, important, and instructive part of Enoch's history, namely, his moral and religious character, expressed in these few but comprehensive words, "Enoch walked with God." Every thing else is transitory and fading. Youthful vigour and beauty are but the short-lived flowers of the Spring, which die as soon as they are born; the honourable distinctions of this world are bubbles of empty air, which burst in a moment and disappear for ever; scientific researches and discoveries are only the amusements of children, who know but in part, and see as "in a glass darkly:" but holy walking with God is the ho-

nourable employment of a man ; it is a permanent and perennial source of satisfaction ; it is the essence of life ; the cure of pain ; the conqueror of death ; the gate of immortality ; it is Heaven upon earth. And wherein does it consist ? “ Can two walk together, except they be agreed ? ” No. Walking with God must therefore commence in reconciliation to God : and Scripture knows, acknowledges, teaches no way of reconciliation but one. And the sacred commentator on the passage and character under review, lays down this great leading principle of religion, as the foundation of Enoch’s holy conversation, and of the honours which he of consequence attained : “ By faith Enoch was translated, “ that he should not see death, and was not found, “ because God had translated him : for before his “ translation he had this testimony, that he pleased “ God. But without faith it is impossible to please “ him : for he that cometh to God must believe “ that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that “ diligently seek him.” Heb. xi. 5, 6. Now, in every age of the world, faith has but one and the same object. From Abel down to the youngest of the Prophets, and from the fisherman who left his nets, and his worldly all, to follow Jesus, to the end of time, the being, the nature, and the will of God have been, and can be, savingly known, and the mercy of God savingly embraced, only through a Mediator.

✕ On this foundation, what a superstructure of Holiness may be raised : What gratitude, love, sub-

mission, and obedience to God! What complacency and delight in him! What kindness, compassion, forbearance, beneficence, and charity towards men! What gentleness, meekness, purity, peace; to adorn, to compose, to tranquillise, to bless the man himself! What constancy, perseverance, uniformity, increase in goodness! What venerability as a patriarch! What dignity as a sovereign! What sanctity as a priest; What respectability as a husband, a father, a master! What utility as a pattern and example! And such an one was Enoch; thus he lived and walked with God; and thus escaped death, that end of all men: "He was not; for God took him." This is the last memorable particular of his history. About the import of the words we can be at no loss, after the Apostle has explained them, by his being "translated that he should not see death." With the manner of that translation we have nothing to do, as Scripture is silent. If God intended it to be a public admonition or encouragement to the men of that generation, we may rest assured he gave full and satisfactory evidence concerning it. That he meant it to afford universal and everlasting instruction to mankind, it is impossible to doubt, from his giving it so honourable and so distinguished a place in his word. And what is the instruction which it administers to the world? Simply this, that a life of faith and holiness is but one remove from glory: that Heaven descended to earth will quickly raise men from earth to Heaven: that death, either averted, or overcome and de-

stroyed, will at length open a passage to perfect union with God, and enjoyment of Him. Why should I detain you, to relate the dreams of visionaries, and the fables of impostors, respecting the manner in which God disposed of Enoch after his assumption? There is no edification, and indeed but little amusement in the bold fictions of a Mahomet, or the wild conjectures of a Jewish Rabbin. We acknowledge no other paradise, or habitation of the blessed, but that represented in Scripture, as the place where God gives the brightest evidences of his gracious presence, and communicates his glory in full splendour. That, to which Jesus on the cross promised to conduct the penitent thief. That which Paul calls the *third* Heaven: and which in other places of the Bible is denominated HEAVEN simply and by way of excellency. Thither was Enoch taken; thither also did Elijah, two thousand one hundred and twenty-one years afterward, mount on a chariot of fire, and the wings of a whirlwind; and finally, thither at length, in placid majesty, ascended the Captain of our Salvation, “leading captivity “captive.”

Thus, in each of the three great periods of the church, was exhibited an instance of a man taken up into Heaven, body and spirit, as a support and encouragement to the hope of believers, of attaining the same felicity. Enoch, before the law was given; Elijah, under the legal economy; and Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, under the evangelical

dispensation. And God, in conducting these events, has gradually disclosed life and immortality, from the dawning of the morning light, to the full glory of meridian splendour. It was a soothing, and an animating spectacle for the faithful of the first world, to see a good man vanish away, and after living his period on earth, in piety, purity, and peace, lodged, not in a tomb, but in the bosom of God. It was yet a stronger presumption of immortality, to those who lived in the second period, to see the Heavens opened for the reception of one of their prophets; and celestial ministers in flaming fire, not of anger, but of love, sent to conduct him to the place of the blessed. But it is a demonstration to Christians, and indeed the earnest and pledge of their inheritance, to see the great Author and Finisher of their faith, gradually and majestically rising through those vast regions which separate earth from Heaven; and to hear the church triumphant summoning the gates of the palace of glory to be opened, to receive the King of Glory, on his coming to prepare mansions of bliss for their reception, when the days of their probation are ended. “Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the Heavens.”

Enoch, Elijah, and Christ, in certain views, can be compared only with each other; but in all things, HE must have the pre-eminence. *They* prophesied through the power and virtue of the spirit *given* unto them; *he* is the *giver* of that spirit to them

and to all the prophets. As mere men, *they* must have had their infirmities, and the infirmities of one of them are upon record; but *he* knew infirmity only by a fellow feeling with the miserable, and he is the atonement for their sins. By the power and mercy of God, they were *taken up* into Heaven; by his own power he *ascended on high*; *they* as servants, *he* as the eternal Son of God. In *them*, we have a repeated instance of bodies glorified without suffering death; *he* “was dead, and is alive again,” and carried to Heaven a body which had been laid in the tomb. In *them* we have an object of admiration and astonishment; in *him*, a pattern for imitation, a Saviour in whom to trust, a ground of hope whereon to rest. Faith *exempted* them from death; and faith shall at length *redeem* all the followers of the Lamb from the power of the grave. *Enoch* and *Elijah* ascended as solitary individuals, *Christ* as the first fruits of them that sleep; and “lifted up,” is drawing an elect world unto him. *They* were admitted to regions unknown, and among society untried: *he* only returned to the place from whence he came.

We conclude the history of Enoch with this obvious, but, we trust, not useless reflection—That those lives which deserve most to be had in remembrance, are most easily recorded, and consist of fewest articles. The history of an Enoch is comprised in three words, while the exploits of an Alexander, a Cæsar, or any other of the scourges and

destroyers of mankind, swell to many volumes. But what comparison is there between the bubble reputation, bestowed by historians, poets, or orators, on the worthless and the wicked, and the solid, sterling praise conferred on the wise and good, by the spirit of God, by whom actions are weighed, and who will at last “bring every secret thing into judgment?” And woe be unto them, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Into what a little measure shrinks the whole history of mankind previous to the *flood*; though a period of no less than one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years! To that great revolution of the world we are now brought; and the following Lecture, if God permit, will contain the first part of the History of Noah; in whose person, the old and new worlds, through the vast chasm of the deluge, were connected together; and who is exhibited in Scripture as a type of him, in whose person Heaven and earth are united, and by whom all things are to be made new. May God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

LECTURE V

GENESIS V. 28, 2

And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son : and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.

THE fortunes and characters of men are various as their faces. What diversity has appeared in the lives, and in the latter end, of those persons whose history has already passed under our review, in the course of these Exercises ! Adam experienced a change more bitter than death. Abel perished by the hand of his brother. The murderer becomes a terror to himself, lives in exile, and dies unnoticed. Enoch is gloriously exempted from the stroke of death, and carried directly to Heaven. Noah survives the whole human race, his own family excepted ; lives to behold a world destroyed, and a world restored.

We are now arrived at that memorable revolution, of which there exist so many striking marks on the external appearance of the globe ; of which there are such frequent and distinct intimations in the traditional monuments and records of all the learned nations of antiquity ; and of which it has pleased God to give such an ample and circumstantial detail in Scripture.

Concerning Noah great expectations were formed, from the moment of his birth. The world was arrived at an uncommon pitch of corruption and degeneracy. The natural evils which flesh is heir to were prodigiously increased by irreligion and vice; so that the earth groaned, as it were, under the curse of God, through the violence and impiety of men. Lamech, the father of Noah, with the fondness and partiality of parental affection, flatters himself that his new-born son would prove a comfort to himself, and a blessing to mankind; and, most probably directed by the spirit of prophecy, bestows upon him a name significant of his future character and conduct; of the station which he was destined to fill, and the purpose which he was intended to serve, in the plan of Providence. He had the satisfaction of living to see his expectations realized; and his eyes closed in peace at a good old age, five years before that great calamity which overwhelmed the human race—the deluge.

Scripture accounts for the universal depravity of that awful period, in these words, “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” Gen. vi. 1, 2. These expressions the most respectable and judicious interpreters explain, as descriptive of unhallowed and imprudent intermarriages between the posterity of pious Seth, here called “the sons of God,” and

the female descendants of wicked Cain, denominated the “daughters of men.” Attracted by external and transitory charms, they form alliances inconsistent with wisdom, and disallowed of Heaven. The invention of the fine arts being in the family of Cain, it is not absurd to suppose, that these were called in aid to personal beauty; and that the allurements of music and dress in particular were employed by the daughters of Jubal, “the father of all such as handle the harp and organ,” and of Tubal-Cain, “the instructor of every artificer in brass and iron,” to support the impression already made by their fair looks. What ensued? That which will always happen to piety unwisely and unequally yoking itself with irreligion and profanity: the evil principle, ever being much more powerful to pervert the good, than the good to reform the evil. *Giants* are said to have been the issue of those unfortunate marriages; literally, perhaps, men of huge stature, like the sons of *Anak* in latter times: certainly, men of lofty, aspiring, haughty minds; the heirs to the pride, vanity, and presumption of their mothers, more than to the decency, wisdom, and piety of their male ancestors. That corruption must have been general indeed, which comprehended all, save Noah and his household; and it must have been very grievous, to constrain the Spirit of God to employ language so strong and so expressive as this, on the occasion: “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

“ And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I
“ have created, from the face of the earth, both man
“ and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls
“ of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made
“ them.” When the whole head is sick, and the
whole heart faint, dissolution and destruction cannot
be at a great distance. “ But Noah was a just
“ man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah
“ walked with God.” How honourable for Noah
to stand thus single, thus distinguished! Goodness
supported and kept in countenance by the mode,
and by multitudes, is amiable and praise-worthy;
but goodness single and alone; goodness stemming
the torrent, resisting the contagion of example, des-
pising the universal sneer, braving universal oppo-
sition, such goodness is superior to all praise: and
such was the goodness of Noah. • He distinguished
himself in the midst of an adulterous and sinful
generation, by his piety, righteousness, and zeal;
and God, who suffers none to lose at his hand, dis-
tinguishes him by special marks of his favour.
“ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”
- Of no character does Scripture speak more highly
than of Noah’s: “ he was a just man, and perfect
“ in his generations, and walked with God.” In
general calamities, it must needs happen that the
innocent suffer with the guilty. But in some cases,
Providence is pleased specially to interpose for the
deliverance of good men. Rather than one worthy
family should perish in the deluge, a whole world
of transgressors is respited, till the means of safety

for that family are provided. Is a sinful city or nation spared? we may rest assured there are some valuable, pious persons among them. According to the idea suggested by our blessed Lord, the righteous are "the salt of the earth," that which seasons the whole mass, and preserves it from putrefaction and corruption. The Apostle Peter styles Noah "a preacher of righteousness." He was not carried away by the prevailing profligacy of his day. He preached by a holy dissent from the prevailing maxims and practices of the times. He preached by an open and bold remonstrance against the general dissoluteness and impiety. And he preached at length by his works; by the construction and fitting up of the ark for the preservation of himself and family, and for saving alive a breed of the various sorts of fowls and animals.

It is with pleasure we once more refer you to the sacred Expositor of the antediluvian history: "By faith," says he, "Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Heb. xi. 7. Here a crowd of ideas rush upon us at once. Behold the great God in the midst of judgment remembering mercy. He will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. But God will not vouchsafe to perform that immediately by a miracle, which may be effected by the blessing of his Providence upon human foresight, industry, and diligence. He

who was pleased to save Enoch, by translating him to Heaven without tasting death, thought fit to preserve Noah by means of an ark of his own building. The design and contrivance is God's; the execution is man's. He who could have transported Noah to a different sphere, and have lodged him there in safety, till the waters of the flood had abated, kept him alive and in safety, rolling in the ark, upon the face of the mighty waters. He, who in the morning of the sixth day, by the Almighty *fiat*, created at first the whole animal world, and though lost, could have in a moment replaced it, by the word of his power, thought proper to preserve alive the race of animals, by providing a place of refuge, and by a special instinct of his Providence, warning them of their approaching danger, and conducting them to shelter,

Behold, dreadful to think! the patience of God at last exhausted: and the decree goes forth. "The earth also was corrupt before God: and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth." Gen. vi. 11—13. God has warned, threatened, borne with men in vain; and Noah has preached to them in vain. The day of the Lord is come, and who shall be able to stand? And who hath seen, heard of, or is able to conceive

a calamity so dreadful? "The end of *all* flesh is "come. I will destroy them *with* the earth." Immediately upon the fall, universal nature underwent a change. The mild influences of the Heavens were changed or withheld; the earth refused to yield her increase to the hand of the cultivator: but the full extent and awful import of the curse was never felt till now. By the deluge the whole face of nature was to be altered; the solid globe dissolved and disjointed; its parts torn asunder from each other; its fertility diminished; that it might present to all future generations, a magnificent palace, but in ruins; the mere skeleton of ancient splendour.

Some ingenious men have supposed, that at this period, the position and motion of our earth, with respect to the sun, were changed: that till then it was so situated in relation to the heavenly bodies, as to possess an equal and universal temperature of air; that hitherto a perpetual Spring went hand in hand with an abundant Autumn: but that then it was placed in the slanting and oblique situation, which occasions diversity of climates and seasons; which exposes one part to the burning and direct rays of the sun: binds another up in perpetual chains of darkness and ice; gives birth to volcanos, earthquakes, tempests, hurricanes, and all that tribe of natural evils which afflict the wretched children of men. The effects, undoubtedly, must have been wonderful, as the event itself is altogether preternatural. I have no intention of going at present into a discus-

sion of the question, whether the extent of the flood was universally over *all* the earth ; nor into a philosophical investigation of the means employed in producing a phenomenon so singular. Taking the Bible account of the matter in its literal import, we will rather make such reflections upon it as may, by the blessing of God, promote the interests of faith and of holiness in our hearts and lives.

Behold, then, the venerable sage, at the admonition of Heaven, undertaking his great work. The foundation is laid ; the fabric advances ; and every stroke of the axe or hammer summons a thoughtless and a guilty world to repentance ; but “ they will not hear, they will not lay it to heart.” I see the good man maligned, derided, insulted. In their gaiety of heart, they scornfully style the ark *Noah’s folly*. The work is finished, but they continue to sing, dance, and play ; and many, it is probable, have an active hand in the construction of that machine, to which they scorn to resort for shelter from the impending danger. Noah is not to be diverted from his purpose. Neither the immensity of the undertaking, nor the length of time which it required, nor the opposition which he meets with from an unbelieving generation, discourage him in the prosecution of a design, planed by infinite wisdom, and recommended by Divine mercy.

How the whole tribe of commentators have gone into the opinion, that the space of one hundred and twenty years were employed in building the ark, is strange and unaccountable. It appears not on the

face of the history : it is irreconcilable to reason and experience : as without a miracle, the parts first constructed must have failed and decayed before the latter parts were finished : and it expressly contradicts the chronological detail of the facts, as delivered to us in Scripture. For Noah was five hundred years old at the birth of his eldest son. When the order for building the ark was given, all his three sons were married, as we learn from the following passage : “ But with thee will I establish my covenant : and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, “ and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives “ with thee.” Gen. vi. 18. The youngest therefore may reasonably be supposed to have seen his fiftieth year : and the flood came upon the earth in the six hundredth year of Noah’s life ; there is left, then, a period considerably less than fifty years, for the execution of the work ; and it most probably occupied a much shorter space than even that.

Some minute inquirers have taken the trouble to calculate the solid contents, and thence to estimate the burthen of this wonderful vessel. A cubit is the distance, in a full grown man, from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger ; for the conveniency of calculation, it has been fixed at a foot and a half of common measure. Upon this supposition the ark contained one million, seven hundred and eighty-one thousand, three hundred and forty-six cubical feet ; which, according to the usual allowance of forty-two feet to a ton, or two thousand pounds weight, makes the whole burthen to be forty-two

thousand four hundred and thirteen tons ; which is considerably more than the burthens of forty ships of one thousand tons each. Such was the vast unwieldy fabric, entrusted, without mast, sail, rudder, or compass, to the mercy of the waves ; and which contained the saved remnant of the human race, and of the animal creation, with all necessary accommodation and provision for the space of more than a year.

Behold, then, the four-footed and the feathered tribes, each according to his kind, by a peculiar instinct from Heaven, flocking to Noah, for protection from the threatening tempest, as formerly they did to Adam, to receive their names. The beasts take warning and hide themselves ; but men, more stupid than the brutes, sin on, till they are destroyed. Every thing announced a storm gathering. Noah preaches to the last hour ; admonishes, entreats, threatens, and invites. What means that preternatural gathering together of the brute creation to one place ? How come they in a moment to change their nature ; to seek what before they shunned ;—to forget all animosity towards each other ? Whence is it that “ the wolf dwells with the lamb, the leopard “ lies down with the kid, and the young lion and “ the fatling together ? ” What so brutish and incorrigible as men given up to their own lusts !

At length all is safely housed, from the dove to the raven, and God shuts in Noah with his charge. When lo ! the face of Heaven is covered with blackness. Nature shudders at the frown of an angry

God—the windows of Heaven are opened ; the rain descends amain ; the barriers that confined the ocean to its appointed bed are removed, and the waters from beneath start up to meet the waters coming down from above, and join their streams to avenge a holy and righteous God of his adversaries. The gradual increase of the calamity is a dreadful aggravation of its horror. Thick clouds first gave the alarm. Rain uncommonly heavy, and of longer than ordinary continuance, increases the growing surprise and consternation. The voice of mirth is heard no more, and “all the daughters of music are brought low.” By degrees the rivers swelling over their banks, and seas forgetting their shores, render the plains and the vallies no places of safety. But the lofty mountains will afford a refuge from the growing plague. Thither, in trembling hope, the wretches fly. The gathered tempest will surely spend itself, and serenity return. Ah, vain hope! the swelling surge gains continually upon them ; all is become sea ; the foundations of the hills are shaken by the tide ; it advances upon them. As their last resource they climb the trees which cover the mountain tops, and cling to them in despair. Their neighbours and friends sink in the gulf before their eyes ! their ears are filled with the shrieks of them that perish. All is amazement and horror. At length they are all overtaken and overwhelmed. To have lengthened their miserable existence so long by vain efforts, is only to have lengthened out anguish. To fill up the measure of their misery, they perish in sight of

a place of security which they cannot reach ; they perish with the bitter remorse of having despised and rejected the means of escape, when they had them in their power ; like the rich man in hell, whose torment was grievously augmented by the sight of Lazarus afar off, in the bosom of Abraham.

Compare with these, the feelings of Noah and his little family within the ark. They enjoy a refuge of God's providing. They have full assurance of the divine protection. Ample provision for the evil day is made. O what gratitude to their Almighty Friend ! O what fervent love among themselves ! O what holy composure and rest in God ! O what awful reflections on the justice and severity of the great Jehovah ! O what sweet and satisfying meditations on his mercy !

The sequel of Noah's History, and the comparison between him and Adam, and between him and Christ, will, if God permit, be the subject of the next Lecture. We cannot conclude the present without reflecting.—

On the danger and mischief which arises from forming graceless connexions. It administers a solemn and suitable admonition to the male part of my audience, who have not already contracted alliances for life, to consider a principle of religion, and a taste for devotion, as among the leading qualities to be sought after in the female character, and the only sure foundation of honourable and lasting friendship ; as the basis of, and the prompter to, every domestic duty.

It administers a just, and, I am sorry to add, a *seasonable* reproof, to that spirit of avarice and selfishness, together with that criminal love of pleasure, which too much characterize the young men of the present day, and to which the higher considerations of piety, modesty, and accomplishments really useful and ornamental, are daily sacrificed.

It instructs my female hearers, too, in the knowledge of what constitutes their real worth and excellence. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." Prov. xxxi. 30. General declaimers against the female sex have got excellent topics for their spleen, in the seduction of the first man by Eve, and the corruption of the old world by the daughters of Cain. I would make a kinder use of these sad events by considering them as instances of the great power which women have over men; and hence earnestly call upon Christian women to cultivate with care and diligence, the graces of that character, and to employ their influence, according to their different relations and opportunities, to diffuse a taste for what is decent, pious, and praise-worthy; and they may rest assured that their friends of the other sex will at least study to appear, what they would have them to be.

The example of Noah is a loud call to aim at singular goodness. The multitude of offenders lessens neither the criminality, nor the danger of any one. Let none then think of "following a multitude to do

"evil." Community in vice may seem to diminish the guilt of sin, but community in suffering is a bitter aggravation of it. Dare to stand, though alone, in the cause of God and truth, knowing that wicked men themselves revere that goodness which they do not love; and secretly approve the virtue which they will not cultivate. Remember who hath said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

You have heard of the destruction of the old world by water; your eyes shall behold that which now is, destroyed by fire. The preservation of Noah, by means which God appointed, is a striking type of the method of salvation from sin, death, and hell, by Jesus Christ. The present day, merciful visitation is the precious season of resorting to that strong hold and place of defence; and to you the call is once more given, "Look to me and be saved;" "come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

LECTURE VIII.

GENESIS VIII. 1.

And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark : and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.

THE word and the providence of God, are the only infallible interpreters of his nature. The existence, and the order of the *visible creation*, evince the being of one Eternal Cause of all things, infinite in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, mercy, and truth. But the harmony, the extent and limits of the divine attributes and perfections, are to be discovered only by observing what comes to pass ; and by reading and understanding what God has been pleased to commit to writing, for our instruction. The light of nature is sufficient, for example, to instruct us, that God is righteous ; and experience assures us, that he is merciful ; but without the help of Revelation, and the history of Providence, we could not, we durst not say, where justice would stop, and when the tide of mercy would begin to flow. And is it not pleasant and encouraging to reflect, upon the authority of both Scripture and experience, that justice, the awful and formidable perfection of the Most High God, has its bounds ;

whereas goodness and tender mercy swell over all limits, possessing a height and depth, a length and breadth, which surpass knowledge? Justice is the river confined within its banks, and terminating its course in the sea; Mercy is the unconfined immeasurable ocean, in surveying the vast extent of which, the eye fails, and thought itself is lost. It is, moreover, delightful to consider, that the very judgments of Heaven, however dreadful in their nature and effects, are upon the whole, and in the end, unspeakable blessings. The wrath of man, and judgments of which men are the authors, like the uncontrolled rage of devouring flames, spare nothing; they consume root and branch together. But divine justice, like the refiner's fire, lays hold only of the dross, and bestows on the remaining ore greater purity and value.

The history of the deluge, among many other instances which might be adduced, is a plain and a striking illustration of these observations. The last Lecture exhibited the fearful triumph of divine justice. We beheld heaven from above, the earth and ocean from beneath, uniting their forces in their Maker's cause; "the windows of heaven opened," the "fountains of the great deep broken up," blending their waters to overwhelm a world of ungodly men. What a prospect did this globe then present to the surrounding spheres! Involved in gross darkness for forty days together: and when the light returns, no dry land appears, for even "all the high hills which were under the whole heaven were

“covered:” And, O tremendous object of Divine vengeance! “All flesh died, that moved upon earth, “both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beasts, and of “every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, “and every man. All in whose nostrils was the “breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. “And every living substance was destroyed which “was upon the face of the ground, both man and “cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of “the heaven; and they were destroyed from the “earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they “that were with him in the ark.” Gen. vii. 21—26. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the “living God.”

At length the tempest of wrath spends itself. At length, after a night so dark, so dreary, and so long, the morning light begins to dawn. Nothing but water is to be seen, except yonder little bark floating on the mighty surge, which threatens every moment to swallow it up, or to dash it impetuously on some rocky mountain's top. It contains the sad remainder of the human race; the hope of all future generations. It is preserved, not by the power of him who constructed, but of him who designed it, and who directed it to be built. It is guided, not by the skill of the mariner, but steered by the hand of Providence. That a vessel of such construction, should preserve its upright position for so long a time, in such a wild uproar of nature, must be ascribed to a perpetual supernatural interposition.

The ark has proved the *protection* and *preserva-*

tion of Noah; but is it not his *prison* also? How gladly do we submit to a temporary inconvenience for the sake of a great and lasting good! But the inconveniences to which we submit in fulfilling the designs of Providence, shall not be prolonged beyond their needful period, nor increased beyond our strength. What an amiable view of the mercy and condescension of God is presented to us at this period of Noah's history? "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast!" And "doth God take care for oxen!" "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark; and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged." He who makes sphere to balance sphere, in the great system of nature, can make one element check and control the rage of another, in the subordinate economy of our little globe. Wind stops the progress, and diminishes the fury of water at God's command. The dominion of any one element prevailing too long must soon prove fatal to the whole; but their powers blending with, opposing, balancing each other, produce that wonderful and delightful harmony, on which the being and the happiness of mankind depend. "The waters prevailed one hundred and fifty days, and after the end of them, they were abated."

According to the best chronological calculations, the different *eras* or stages of this great event, adapted to our reckoning of time, are thus fixed. A few days after the death of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, who was born two hundred and forty-three years be-

fore Adam died, and in whose person of course, the creation of the world and the flood seemed almost to meet; I say a few days after *Methuselah's* death, God commanded Noah, on the tenth day of the second month, answering to the thirtieth of November, in the year of the world one thousand six hundred and fifty-six, and before Christ two thousand three hundred and forty-eight, to prepare that week for going into the ark, and to receive all the living creatures which came thither by direction of Providence, in the course of seven days.

On the seventeenth day of the second month, or the seventh of December, in the six hundredth year of Noah's life, the deluge began, after the Lord had shut him in with all his family. The rain from heaven, and the flux from the ocean, continued, without intermission, forty days and forty nights, till the waters prevailed fifteen cubits above the highest mountains; and then stayed, on the seventeenth of January. It continued flood, one hundred and fifty days, including the forty days from its commencement to its full height; that is, to the seventeenth day of the seventh month, or the sixth of May, when the flood abated, and the ark rested upon one of the mountains of *Ararat* or *Armenia*. On the first day of the tenth month, or July nineteenth, the waters still continuing to decrease, the tops of the neighbouring mountains became visible from the ark. At the end of forty days from thence, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, or the twenty-eighth of August, Noah opened the window of the ark, and

sent forth the raven, which never returned to him. After expecting her for seven days in vain, on the third of September, he sent forth the dove, which returned to him the same day, having found no rest for the sole of her foot, through the continuance of the waters. After seven days more, on the tenth of September, he again sends forth the dove, which returned in the evening, with an olive leaf in her mouth, a proof that the waters had decreased below the height of that plant. After waiting yet seven days more, Noah again sends forth the dove, on September seventeenth, which returned not again to him, a proof that "the ground was dry," and that this bird could now find food to sustain life, out of the ark.

On the first day of the first month, answering to October the twenty-third, in the year of the world one thousand six hundred and fifty-seven, when Noah entered into the six hundred and first year of his age, on this first day of the new world, he removed the covering of the ark, and beheld that the ground was dry. And finally, on the twenty-seventh of the second month of this new year, or December the eighteenth, at God's command, who had shut him in, Noah came out of the ark, and all who were with him, in perfect safety; after they had been confined therein, the space of one year and eleven days.

And now that he is liberated from so long a confinement, what are his first sentiments; what is the first use he makes of restored liberty? It is neither a day of business, nor of pleasure, for himself, but

of piety and gratitude towards God. A portion of the animals, hitherto cherished and protected with so much care and tenderness; and preserved in the general wreck of nature, must yield their lives, and pour out their blood by their patron's hand, at God's altar. Was not this a direct acknowledgment, that his own life was forfeited with those of the rest of mankind; but spared by an act of distinguishing grace? The stock of living creatures was awfully reduced by the deluge; and this consideration, with a worldly and selfish mind, might have been pleaded as an excuse for delaying sacrifice till victims were multiplied by length of time. But when works of piety, charity, or mercy are to be performed, a gracious spirit considers the urgency of the call, rather than the largeness of means. What is saved from God and the wretched, from religion and humanity, will never make any one rich. What is bestowed on works of piety and mercy, is properly laid out at more than common interest. Did Noah's six couple of beasts, and of birds, increase more slowly, that the seventh was devoted in sacrifice to his Maker and Preserver? I suppose not. In this, if in any sense, what the Wise Man says is true, "There is that scattereth and is boundeth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." How acceptable to God are the sacrifices of an humble, grateful, faithful heart! The ground that was cursed for the offence of one, and deluged for the offences of many, by the faith and piety of one is delivered from the curse, and for ever secured

from the danger of a second flood : " And the Lord
" smelled a sweet savour ; and the Lord said in his
" heart, I will not again curse the ground for man's
" sake ; for the imagination of man's heart is evil
" from his youth : neither will I again smite any
" more every living thing as I have done." Gen.
viii. 21.

Having satisfied the demands, and received the consolation of religion, Noah and his sons are dismissed of God to their secular employments, to the possession and cultivation of their spacious inheritance. All the grants which had been given to the first man, and all the blessings pronounced upon him, are renewed to Noah and to his family. The whole animal creation is afresh subjected to their power and authority. And now, for the first time, we read of the flesh of animals being permitted unto man for food. But, in the very same breath, the use of blood is forbidden to mankind. Was it intended to admonish men to be tender of the lives of the brute creation ; and not to take away, wantonly and unnecessarily, what they are unable to restore ? Was it to teach men not to use as common food, what was, from the beginning, the symbol of atonement ? Is it that the thing prohibited is unclean and unwholesome for aliment ? Was it, by placing a fence round that which constitutes the life of a beast, to guard, with the greater sanctity, the life of man ? The interdiction undoubtedly has a meaning, for none of the precepts of God are merely arbitrary. Wherever he interposes by a special mandate, there we may rest

assured, some end of piety, of purity, or of mercy, is to be accomplished by it.

God never communicates his grace by halves. He is but half preserved, who has escaped one great calamity, if he must afterwards live in perpetual fear. Noah's family has outlived the deluge; but every dark cloud is a memorial of that grievous plague, and a threatening of its return. Every watery cloud, therefore, with the sun in opposition to it, shall be an assurance, written in the most distinct characters, to them and all generations of men following, that "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." The bow in the clouds existed no doubt before this; the natural cause always and uniformly must produce the same effect; but it has now a use and meaning unknown before. It formerly manifested in its most beautiful colours, stupendous size, and exact shape and form, the God of *Nature*; now it has become a witness for the God of *Grace*. It was always an object beautiful to behold; but, how much greater its excellence and importance, as the token of God's covenant! When natural appearances lead to saving acquaintance with nature's God, then they are truly valuable and useful.

We are now come to the last memorable event of Noah's life; which though far less honourable for him, than those which preceded it, the sacred historian has nevertheless recorded, with the same exactness and fidelity, which he has employed in transmitting the rest of his history. Noah, though advanced to a late period of life, and assured that

henceforth the duration of human life was to be greatly abridged, engages with alacrity in the labours of husbandry. That God who thought fit to save him from the flood, by an ark of his own building, will not preserve him alive, but by fruits of his own raising. He who would reap the clusters of the vine, must first plant, shelter, prop, and prune the vine. But behold the juice of the grape in a new state; possessing a quality unheard of before. Eaten from the tree, or dried in the sun, it is simple, and nutritious like the grain from the stalk of corn; pressed out and fermented, it acquires a fiery force, it warms the blood, it mounts to the brain, it leads reason captive, it overpowers every faculty, it triumphs over its lord. How often have arts been invented, which proved fatal to the inventors? Every poison, it is said, contains, or is produced contiguous to, its antidote. Such is the care, such the goodness of God to men. But alas! must it not also be observed that our very food and cordials contain a poison, through the ignorance or excess of man. Was Noah unacquainted with this intoxicating quality of wine, and overtaken through inexperience? or did the faithful monitor of the old world, and the father of the new, deliberately sacrifice decency and understanding to this insinuating foe? In either case, who can help deploring his shameful, his degraded condition; and the consequences which flowed from it! We pity the dishonoured father; but we detest the unnatural son, who could make sport of his parent's shame. He who intoxicates himself does ill;

but he who in cool blood, can take an indecent, or an injurious advantage of the intoxication of another, does worse. The modesty and dutifulness of two of Noah's sons exhibit a lovely and instructive example to youth;—their ingenuous shame, their eagerness to conceal the infirmity of their father. They deserve to be blessed with numerous and thriving families, who have practised duty and obedience to their parents. This accordingly is a blessing entailed upon Shem and Japhet; and Ham's disrespectful and indecent behaviour towards his father, is in like manner punished in the entail of a lasting and heavy curse upon his offspring. Of all the precepts of the law, the fifth most obviously, directly, and certainly requites the breach, or the observance of itself. Noah awakes from his wine, and meets the reproof of his intemperance, in the knowledge of what his sons had done unto him, when he was not himself. And what reproof so keen and severe, to an ingenuous mind like his, as the reflection, that he had made himself an object of scorn and derision to one part of his own family, and of sorrow and pity to the other!

At length the period arrives that Noah must die; and he who had seen the world in three different states—as it came from the hands of the Creator, unless as it was affected by the fall—covered over with the waters of a flood—and restored again through the mercy of Heaven, at last sinks into the grave, and ceases to have any farther interest in the

world. He survives that great destruction, the deluge, three hundred and fifty years; lives to instruct a new race of men in the knowledge, the love, and the worship of the true God; lives to see his progeny increased and multiplied, and spreading on every side; lives to exhibit to a short-lived race of mortals, an example of patriarchal dignity and longevity; and dies at the age of nine hundred and fifty years; short of the life of Methuselah only by nineteen. From that period, the life of man began gradually to decrease, till it shrunk into its present little measure. Whether life be long or short, "death certainly is the end of all men, and the "living should lay it to his heart."

Noah and Adam may be compared, and contrasted in various respects. Adam the father of the first world; Noah of the second. Adam, by one wilful transgression, involved all mankind in ruin; Noah, by many repeated efforts, in vain endeavoured to save mankind from impending destruction. The •unbelief and disobedience of Adam affected all; the faith of Noah preserved a remnant. The grant of the whole globe was conferred on these two alone, of all mankind. For the crime of the one, the earth was cursed; through the sacrifice of the other, the curse was withdrawn. In both, their own ill behaviour was punished in the ill conduct and behaviour, and in the punishment of their children. Upon the guilty son of Adam God pronounces sentence, and executes judgment in person: the injured

father himself, in the case of Noah, is made the minister of wrath, to denounce the vengeance of God upon his own guilty son.

Adam and Noah were both distinguished types of Christ; and from this they derive their chief dignity and importance. Some interpreters, who wish to find out an evangelical meaning to every the minutest circumstance in the sacred records of the Old Testament, have alleged that the import of the names of the antediluvian patriarchs, taken in their order, contain a prophecy of the Messiah; with which I shall present you, rather as discovering an honest zeal for the prevalency of Gospel ideas, than as containing a solid and satisfactory argument, in support of Gospel truth. Blessed be God, our most holy faith is built on a broader, surer, and more immovable foundation, than the uncertain and arbitrary interpretation of a few Hebrew names. But the speculation is at least innocent, and may perhaps have afforded some degree of consolation to the pious minds which have adopted it. The explanation of the names alluded to is this. *Adam*, man: *Seth*, placed: *Enos*, in misery: *Cainan*, lamentable: *Mahalaleel*, the blessed God: *Jared*, shall come: *Enoch*, teaching: *Methuselah*, that death shall send: *Lamech*, to the smitten, or miserable: *Noah*, consolation. But we are fully warranted by many clear, indubitable, and explicit applications of Scripture, "to preach the unsearchable riches of the Gospel of Christ," from the history of Noah. Shall I encroach upon your patience, and

proceed to it now? or implore your candour for an attentive hearing of it, extended to its proper length, and displayed in its minuter circumstances, in a future Lecture? I must trespass no longer upon the former; but rather trust to the latter. And the more, that I cannot but wish both preacher and hearers might bring freshness of spirits, patience of attention, and thirst of improvement, to a subject of first rate importance in the scale of divine truth. And now may He who, by the ark of Gopher wood, saved Noah and his household from a deluge of water, deliver us, by the grace of his Son Christ Jesus, from that more dreadful deluge of fire, which Scripture assures us shall come upon the "world of the ungodly." "Flee now to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope:—behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." To the God of mercy, through the Son of his love, be ascribed immortal praise. Amen.

LECTURE IX.

ISAIAH LIV. 7-10.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth: so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

AS the lesser streams fall into and are mixed with the greater; and as all rivers empty themselves, and are lost in the ocean; so the whole course of events, from the creation of the world, in their separate currents, and in their general and combined tide, flows towards one grand era, styled in Scripture, the *fulness* of time; and terminates in one event, of infinitely greater moment than all the rest; the “manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh.” The patriarchal dignity, prophetick foreknowledge and penetration, the sanctity of the priesthood, and the regal majesty, all point out, all move towards, all centre and settle in Him, who is “the everlasting

"Father," "the Prophet who should arise," "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession," the "Prince of the kings of the earth."

We are struck with a pleasing awe when we converse with the venerable men who lived before the flood : Adam, the first of men; Enoch, who walked with God ; Noah, the preserver and restorer of the human race. But in tracing the history of their lives, a still small voice continually whispers us in the ear, saying, A greater than Adam, a greater than Enoch, a greater than Noah is here : a voice from Heaven proclaims, Sinners attend ; "Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him." Some, with more zeal and honesty than wisdom and truth, have laboured to discover and to establish a resemblance between our blessed Lord and those who were types of him, in every the minutest circumstances of their lives, and in every expression they employ to describe their private and personal feelings and situations. This has been carried so far, as to strain and stretch the penitential language of David in the fifty-first Psalm, respecting the matter of Uriah, into expressions suitable to the character and condition of the Messiah, in certain supposed circumstances. Guarding ourselves against every thing like a forced construction and application of Scripture ; without hunting after fanciful resemblances, which tend to weaken and impair the truth, instead of strengthening and supporting it ; we will endeavour carefully to point out and improve those which actually exist ; namely, such as

the Spirit of God directs us to form, by pointing them out to us in the written word; or such as by fair analogy, that is, from known and admitted facts, or from obvious and incontrovertible reasonings, we are warranted to form for ourselves.

Happily, the history of Noah is one of those, in the use and application of which, Scripture has lent us much assistance. The very *name* of that Patriarch was not given him without a meaning and design, which extended much farther than to his person, and the day in which he lived. "This same," said his pious father, "shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." *Noah* signifies *comfort, rest, peace*. And when God is bringing his first-begotten into the world, this is his proclamation by the mouth of his Prophet, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isaiah xl. 1, 2. And that we may be at no loss to what period, and to what person these expressions are to be applied, it immediately follows, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough

“ places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be
 “ revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for
 “ the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isaiah xl.
 3—5. Was Noah an expected deliverer from the
 curse pronounced upon the ground for man’s disobedience? Alas! the curse continued nevertheless;
 nay the very *blessings* of life become accursed to
 every impenitent transgressor: but Christ “ is our
 “ peace, who has redeemed us from the curse,” not
 of the ground, but of the law, “ being made a curse
 “ for us;” and under whose dominion, when finally
 established, “ there shall be no more curse.”

“ Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord;” and
 of Christ he saith, “ Behold my servant whom I
 “ uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.”
 “ Noah was a just man, and perfect in his genera-
 “ tions:” and of whom speaks the Prophet, when
 he saith, “ He had done no violence, neither was
 “ any deceit in his mouth,” and the Apostle, “ Who
 “ did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;”
 and again, “ Such an High Priest became us, who
 “ is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sin-
 “ ners.” Noah was a preacher of righteousness;
 and the Spirit of prophecy puts these words into the
 mouth of the Messiah himself, “ I delight to do thy
 “ will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.
 “ I have preached righteousness in the great congre-
 “ gation; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord,
 “ thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness
 “ within my heart, I declared thy faithfulness and
 “ thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving

"kindness, and thy truth, from the great congregation." Psalm xl. 8—10. Noah preached, and preached in vain, to a corrupted, hardened generation, ripe for the destruction of a flood; Jesus, with similar mortification and regret preached to an impenitent, incorrigible nation, devoted to destruction by means of a Roman army. "Noah walked with God:" Christ says of himself, "I and my Father are one:" and "my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." But Noah, though righteous, could not by that righteousness save the men of his generation from the judgments of God; his faith and holiness availed himself, and those who with him feared, believed, and prepared; but could not save another: and there is a supposed state of corruption so great, and a day of vengeance so awful, that though these *three* men, *Noah, Daniel, and Job*, were in the land, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness: but the righteousness of the blessed Redeemer is of such infinite value and perfection, as to deliver from spiritual and eternal death, an innumerable multitude of transgressors.

But the most memorable incident in the history of Noah's life, was the "building of the ark for the saving of his house." Every circumstance relating to which exhibited a figure of him who was to come. And first, they exactly coincide in respect of the design or contrivance. The plan of the ark was formed in the eternal mind, long before it was communicated to Noah; thus believers are

“chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of “the world.” To human apprehension at first sight, and to human understanding enlightened by experience, and the astonishing improvements made in naval architecture, a vessel of such construction would be far from appearing the likeliest means of preservation from a calamity like the deluge. Not a seaman or ship-builder in Britain, but would pronounce it a clumsy piece of work, would affirm that it could not possibly live at sea, and predict its foundering in the deep, even without the attack of a storm. Thus “the cross was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to “them who believe, Christ is the power of God, “and the wisdom of God.” We read of no other methods of safety being thought of, or attempted, by the thoughtless men of the antediluvian world. When the evil overtook them they would naturally flee to such wretched refuge as despair pointed out; but, whatever other means of salvation in the great and terrible day of the Lord, human imagination may have devised, the Scripture saith expressly, “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there “is none other name under heaven given among “men, whereby we must be saved:” Acts iv. 12. and unavailing, in that day, will be the desponding invocations of impenitent sinners, to “the rocks “to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them “from the presence of God and the wrath of the “Lamb.”

As the ark was a type of the Messiah, being both

designs of infinite wisdom ; so did they also coincide in the end or purpose to which they were destined, the salvation of those who fled, and who flee thither for refuge. “ Noah prepared an ark for the saving of his “ house ;” and “ God so loved the world, that he gave “ his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in “ him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John iii. 16. And “ after that in the wisdom of God, “ the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased “ God by the foolishness of preaching to save them “ that believe.” 1 Cor. i. 21. Both of them fully and perfectly answer the end of their institution. The ark was at once a place of shelter from the storm : contained all necessary accommodation and provision ; furnished opportunity and means of the most delightful communion and fellowship ; and constituted the dearest bond of union and love. Who does not see in this, that wonderful person, of whom prophecy thus speaks, “ A man shall be as an “ hiding place from the wind, and a covert from “ the tempest : as rivers of water in a dry place, as “ the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Isaiah xxxii. 2. In whom “ it has pleased the Father that “ all fulness should dwell ;” of whom “ the whole “ family in Heaven and earth is named ;” who thus declares in his own person, “ Those that thou gavest “ me I have kept, and none of them is lost ;” who enjoins them “ to love one another,” and prays for them, that “ they all may be one, as thou Fa- “ ther art in me, and I in thee, that they also may “ be one in us.”

The attractive influence of the Gospel, and its blessed tendency to tame and subdue the high thoughts and the savage dispositions of the human heart, were beautifully prefigured by the instinctive call of Providence to the brute creation to seek shelter in the ark, and by the placability and gentleness of their dispositions towards each other while they continued in it. The words of Isaiah are literally a history of the deluge, and they contain a prediction equally beautiful and striking, of the peaceableness and concord of Christ's kingdom, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah xi. 6—9. Under the influence of Christ's spirit, the fierce and the proud, the cruel and the resentful, the envious and the passionate, "put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness long-suffering;" and learn to "forbear one another, to forgive one another."

Again; the figure shifting from the ark, to him who built and constructed it, according to the pat-

tern given him of God, Noah himself becomes the type, and Jesus the person typified. The plan or design of the ark was of God; the execution was Noah's: in like manner the plan of redemption which was formed of old, even from everlasting, God was at length manifested in the flesh to execute, and in it he laboured and persevered, till bowing his head, he said, "It is finished." What shall we say? The very waters of the flood have a figurative prospect to gospel times and gospel ideas. The deluge was a purifier of the old world, corrupted and defiled by sin; and "a few, that is, eight souls, "were saved by water;" the antitype of which remarkable event, we are informed by the Apostle Peter, is our salvation by baptism; "The like figure "whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, "[not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but "the answer of a good conscience towards God,] by "the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. iii. 21. When we behold the same element destructive to one and salutary to another, are we not led to think of that doctrine which is "unto God a sweet savour of "Christ, in them that are saved and in them that "perish; to the one it is a savour of death unto "death, and to the other a savour of life unto life;" and of that other figure under which the Baptist represents the power and coming of the Son of God: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly "purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: "but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable "fire?" Mat. iii. 12.

The wind or spirit which passed over the earth,

and assuaged the waters, points out to us not obscurely the power of that divine Spirit, who in the beginning "moved upon the face of the deep," "and reduced chaos into order and beauty:" and who through the whole course of Providence "sitteth upon the flood;" even "the Lord on high, who is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." Is it not sweetly figurative of that dawn of hope, that proclamation of mercy, before which the tide of wrath begins to ebb and to subside?

The figure of the dove declares its own meaning and import. In the natural purity and innocence of that sweet bird; in her going and returning; in the expressive speed of her first excursion; in the expressive symbol she bore in her mouth at her second return, the olive leaf; in the clear and explicit information conveyed by her not returning again the third time, it is impossible not to observe a prefiguration of the purity and innocence of the Holy Jesus, the *Mediator* between God and man. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth *peace*, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation?" "Lo, the Winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." As the state of the world was gradually unfolded to Noah by the different appearances and conduct of his dove; so was the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ, gradually disclosed to the world, in types, in allegories,

and by predictions, till the morning light at length became perfect day, and "God, who at sundry times, "and in divers manners, spake in time past unto "the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days "spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the "worlds." Heb. i. 1, 2.

As the ark, after the tossings and tempest of the flood, rested safely on the top of Mount Ararat; so Christ having suffered all things that were appointed, "entered into his glory," and established the "faith of them that believe in him, upon a rock, "against which the gates of hell never shall prevail." The ark afforded protection to those only who fled for shelter under its roof, and whom God shut up within it. It was not merely the *sight* of that wonderful fabric, nor the *knowledge* and *approbation* of the plan, nor an *active hand* in the rearing of it, nor an *external adherence* to it, when the evil day came, that afforded safety to the miserable. Our Lord himself furnishes us with the application of these important circumstances, "Not every one that saith "unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom "of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of my "Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me "in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied "in thy name? and in thy name have cast "out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work "iniquity." Mat. vii. 21—23. And impressed with

an awful sense of it, Paul says of himself, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.

Farther; when we see Noah at the altar of God, offering the sacrifices of thanksgiving, presenting a victim of every clean bird and beast, and God smelling a savour of rest; ceasing from his anger, remitting the curse, and establishing a new covenant upon better promises, We "behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world," Christ the altar that is erected; the priest who officiates, and the victim which is offered up. We behold provision made for the remission of transgressions committed under the second covenant, for which there was no remedy under the first. The passage on which this discourse is built, is a full and particular illustration of this. The whole chapter refers to the bringing in of the Gentile nations to the standard of the Messiah. "For thy Maker is thine husband, [the Lord of Hosts is his name,] and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken, and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment;

“but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy
 “on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is
 “as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have
 “sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go
 “over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not
 “be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the
 “mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed;
 “but my kindness shall not depart from thee,
 “neither shall the covenant of my peace be remov-
 “ed,” saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.”

Isaiah liv. 5—10. Expressions beautifully figurative of the strength, beauty, and duration of the Christian Church, and of the immoveable foundation on which the Christian Faith is built.

Finally, the rainbow, the token of God's covenant of peace with the earth, produced, in the course of nature, by the rays of the sun falling on a cloud impregnated with rain; without straining for a similitude, exhibits mercy rejoicing over judgment; the rays of the sun of righteousness reflected from, and dispersing the clouds of divine wrath and human guilt. It represents the dispensations of the Most High towards men, as distinguished from those spiritual beings who never sinned, and those who never shall be saved. In hell, the gloom is not for a single instant dispelled by one beam of light, nor despair relieved by one ray of hope. The serenity of Heaven is never obscured by one frown from the face of God. But our world is the theatre, on which are displayed, “Mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other;” “truth springing out of the earth, and righteousness look-

"ing down from Heaven." The bow in the cloud is the reverse of that described by the Psalmist: "He hath bent his bow and made it ready: he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death: he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." Psalm vii. 12, 13. No, this is a bow unbent, armed with no deadly weapon, and its dangerous, threatening side averted from us, and turned towards heaven. The bow is never to be seen but when one side of the heaven is clear, and the sun above the horizon; unless it be by the sober, silver rays of the moon's mild, reflected light. Thus every thing useful and pleasing in nature, every thing satisfying and consolatory in Providence, in order to be perceived and enjoyed, must be irradiated, explained, and applied, by the eternal wisdom, the word of God, "the true light which enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world;" and thus many of the objects which we are incapable of contemplating by the direct and immediate illumination of the glorious "Father of Lights," are tempered to our perception, use, and delight, by reflection from other orbs. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Thus have we endeavoured to point out those particulars in the person, character, and life of Noah, which seem more obviously typical of Christ the Lord; but I cannot conclude the parallel, without directing your thoughts to one article of resemblance more. The old world, having undergone the purgation of a flood, was delivered in its renewed

state to Noah and his natural posterity for a possession : and from the world that is, when purified by fire, " We, according to his promise, look for new " heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." " He that sitteth upon the throne " saith, Behold I make all things new ! for the " former things are passed away." And he that is before the throne saith, " In my Father's house are " many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told " you : I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go " and prepare a place for you, I will come again and " receive you unto myself, that where I am there " ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and " the way ye know." " Blessed is he who shall " eat bread in the kingdom of God." " Blessed are " they that do his commandments, that they may " have right to the tree of life, and may enter in " through the gates into the city."

Let me now exhort you in the words of Christ : " Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye " have eternal life ; and they testify of Him, who " is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the " beginning and the end : " and as you read and meditate, the light will break in upon you, and the Saviour of the world will stand confessed in every page, in every line ; so that ye may say one to another, in the words of Andrew to Simon his brother, " We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." And when you see all that is venerable in respect of antiquity, all that is sacred in office, all that is dignified in royalty, bringing

their glory and honour to him, lay yourselves at his feet, and say, "He is our Lord, and we will worship him;" for "surely this is the Son of God."

And here closes the first great period of the world. There next ensues a very considerable space of time, fruitful indeed in names, but barren in events. Providence has thought fit to draw a veil over it for this obvious reason, that however amusing or instructive the detail of that period might be to us, as citizens of this world, having no special relation to the History of Redemption, it cannot be very deeply interesting to us as Christians. And the design of the Bible is not so much to convey to us natural and political knowledge, as the knowledge of "the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal." The Sacred Historian accordingly hastens on to the times of Abraham, when the promises and predictions of the Messiah become more clear and express, and that Saviour was explicitly announced, "in whom all the families of the earth" should at length be blessed.

When we have marked the progress of the dawn, and observed the first rays of this rising sun, through the medium of type, figure, and prediction; when we have considered the tokens of approaching glory in the East; let us look up together, and behold the splendour of the full-blown day; let us contemplate the glory spread around us, by "the sun shining in his strength." The scattered glimmerings of light,—a terrestrial paradise, the first promise of de-

liverance by the seed of the woman, Abel's sacrifice, Enoch's translation, Noah's ark, and all that followed during so many ages, were at length collected and lost in that one great luminary, which is the light of the Christian world. But, alas! "this is the
"condemnation, that light is come into the world,
"and men love darkness rather than light: because
"their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth
"evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light,
"lest his deeds should be reproved." Let us endeavour to approve ourselves children of the light and of the day: and observe and follow him, who thus speaks concerning himself, "I am the light of the
"world; he that followeth me shall not walk in
"darkness, but shall have the light of life."

LECTURE X.

GENESIS XII. 1.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.

IT would yield neither amusement nor instruction, to lay before you in detail, the genealogical succession of the sons of Noah, from the flood to the calling of Adam. Scripture presents us with a very general view of that period. It shows us mankind engaged in pursuits common to men in every age. It exhibits the usual and natural operations, and the effects of pride, and ambition, and avarice: plans of empire formed; imperial cities founded; new discoveries made, and settlements established. For a considerable time, the recent horrors of the deluge must have laid fast hold of the minds of men; as the awful monuments of it were every where before their eyes. This would naturally, for a while, confine them to the mountainous regions of Armenia, where the ark first rested. But as their fears diminished, and their numbers increased, we find them, allured by the beauty and fertility of the plains, which were washed by the Tygris and the Euphrates, descending gradually from the heights, and spreading along the vast and fruitful valleys of Shinar or Chaldea.

And he who had seen the whole human race cut off for their wickedness, his own family consisting of eight persons excepted, lived to see the descendants of that family, almost as numerous and as profligate as the generation of men which had been destroyed by the flood. He had the mortification, in particular, of seeing his posterity engaged in an enterprise equally absurd, vain, and impious; that of building "a city and a tower, whose top should reach unto **Heaven**," to transmit their names with renown to posterity, to be the great seat of empire, and thereby the means of preserving them in one grand system of political union, and of securing them from discord and dispersion.

The sacred volume informs us, that the very means which they had vainly devised to keep themselves together, in the wisdom of God, separated and scattered them. But the history of that event falls not within the design of these exercises. Leaving Nimrod and his vain-glorious companions to erect the monument of their own folly, and to feel the consequences of their impiety, let us attend the sacred historian in tracing, not the rise and progress of empire, but the formation, the unfolding, and the execution of the plan of redemption. Dropping the mighty founders of Nineveh and Babylon in that oblivion, wherein Providence has plunged them, never to emerge, let us accompany the father of the faithful from Ur of the Chaldees, to the place of his destination, and let us observe the increasing splen-

being exhibited in Scripture as the pattern of a powerful, prompt, and active faith in God, we mark, in their order, the appearances and the effects of that faith, in the successive trials to which it was exposed. The very first act of his obedience to the will of Heaven, proves the existence and the prevalency of this powerful principle. When called to leave his country and his father's house, "he went out, not knowing," not *caring*, "whither he went." What could have induced him to make such a surrender, but a sense of his duty to God, an entire acquiescence in the wisdom and goodness of Providence, and a full assurance that his Heavenly Father both could and would indemnify him, for every sacrifice which he was called to make! A sacrifice similar to this every real Christian virtually offers up, when he renounces the pomp and pleasure of this vain world, to the hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Ur of the Chaldees was become a land of idolatry. Abram's nearest relations had lost the knowledge, and deviated from the true worship of the God of their fathers. To have continued there, would have been to prefer a situation dangerous to religion and virtue. Why may we not suppose the call given him to depart, to be the impulse of an honest and enlightened mind, stirred at the sight of so many idols, and the impure rites of their worshippers; and prompted to flee, at whatever expense, from scenes of so much piety and pollution. When men are to receive immediately their indemnification or equi-

valent, the merit of a surrender is small; but it requires the faith and trust of Abram, to take a general promise of God as full security. But his faith had to struggle, in the very setting out, with difficulties seemingly unsurmountable. ✦ The promises made to him were not only conveyed in very general terms, and the accomplishment removed to a great distance; but natural impossibilities also barred the way. What a slender prospect must a man entertain of a numerous offspring, when both nature and religion prevent the possibility of his having children? The Spirit of God therefore bestows a just tribute of praise on this part of his conduct: he “believed God, and it was accounted to him for “righteousness,” because that “against hope, he “believed in hope.” But when we come to examine the promise more particularly, we shall find that it contained every thing which can rouse and fire a noble and generous mind: personal honour and felicity; “I will bless thee and make thy name “great;” a numerous and a thriving progeny, who to latest ages should acknowledge him as their founder, and glory in their relation to him; “I will “make of thee a great nation, and thou shalt be a “blessing:” universal benefit accruing to the human race from him, “In thee shall all the families of “the earth be blessed.” Behold then the illustrious exile turning his back on home, attended only by his aged parent, sinking into the grave under the weight of years and infirmity; his beloved Sarai; and Lot his nephew, who, it would seem, was determined

to share the fortunes of his pious uncle, and with him to sacrifice every worldly consideration to religion. With Providence for their protector and guide, and the word of God for their encouragement and consolation, they set out in confidence, and arrive at their destined habitation in safety. But God, who had provided for Abram a country, would nevertheless have him carry away from Chaldea, all his honestly acquired property ; for true faith makes light of none of God's benefits : and worldly prosperity, honourably acquired, moderately and thankfully enjoyed, is an undoubted mark of God's favour.

Being arrived at Canaan, God appears to Abram again, and informs him that this was the land which he had in view for him ; and renews the declaration, " unto thy seed will I give this land." In these words, two things are remarkable. First, a farther delay of the accomplishment of the promise, *I will give* ; and secondly, a transferring of the gift of it, from Abram himself to his seed. Each of these alone had been sufficient to have cooled an ordinary ardour, and to have discouraged an ordinary spirit. But the good man discovers no symptom of dissatisfaction or disappointment, at either the delay, or the change of destination ; he does not so much as inquire when or how that promised offspring of his was to arise. It is sufficient for him, that he is following the call of Heaven, and that he is blessed with the divine presence through his pilgrimage ; with him, even " hope deferred maketh" not " the heart sick ;" he finds he is not even now

come to his rest, yet repines not. But though he finds no house nor city for himself to dwell in, he finds both leisure and inclination to erect an altar unto God, "And there builded he an altar unto the Lord who had appeared unto him." Gen. xii. 7. He who has set up his rest in the Almighty, is every where, and always at home; and a truly gracious spirit will never omit a work of piety and mercy, under a pretence of wanting means or opportunity.

Why should we inquire, in what *manner* God appeared unto Abram: or how much wiser should we be for knowing it? Has not the great, the Almighty God, resistless power over our bodies and our minds? And can he not make every element, every creature, a vehicle of his will to us? Behold the Patriarch removing from place to place; "sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange land," travelling from Sichem to the plain of Moreb; from Bethel to Hai; probably through fear of the idolatrous Canaanites, who, we are told, then occupied the land. But though he sojourn, as the wayfaring man, but for a night, the altar is constituted, and the victim is offered up. And Abram's altar is not built in the spirit wherein many a sacred edifice has been since reared, and many a pious volume purchased, for show, not for use;—having built an altar to Jehovah, "he called upon the name of Jehovah."

But a wandering life through Canaan is not the worst of his condition. His faith is put to a new and severe trial; he is driven out of that land by

famine. The country so pompously promised, as a portion to his seed, when increased to the number of the sand upon the sea shore, refuses subsistence sufficient to his family in its present diminutive state. What then? Let Nature or Providence raise what obstacles they may, faith removes or surmounts them. He sits not down sullenly with the peevish prophet, saying, "I do well to be angry," but he employs sagacity and diligence to discover, and to obtain, the means of relief. He retires to Egypt, which the scarcity had not reached, or which it had afflicted in an inferior degree. Self-preservation is the first law of our nature; "and he that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

But where, alas! shall we find the faith that never staggered through unbelief; the confidence in Heaven that never failed? On his entrance into Egypt, Abram is seized with an unaccountable fit of distrust, altogether unbecoming his character, and equally injurious to God, to Sarai, and to the king of Egypt. He is afraid of trusting the honour of his wife, during a temporary residence in a strange country, to that God, at whose command he had given up his native country and his all. He injures the friend and companion of his youth, in supposing her capable of being allured by the splendour and flattery of Egypt, to forget her duty to her husband. He affronts a prince whom he knew not, by suspecting him of a base and criminal design against the

peace and honour of a stranger, driven into his dominions for relief from famine. He has recourse to the crooked path of cunning and falsehood, when the direct road of fairness and truth would have served his turn much better. Over caution is brother to great rashness. He who wants to show himself over wise, soon proves himself to be a fool. The very means which Abram had devised for preserving Sarai's chastity, exposed her to danger. As his sister she might be lawfully addressed by any one; as his wife, she was considered as sacred to himself; for the rights of wedlock were held in reverence, even by the idolatrous Egyptians. What must have been his feelings when the imposture was detected? How keen his remorse, to see Pharaoh and his innocent household, plagued for his fault? The conscious shame of having acted wrong, and of thereby having brought mischief upon another, is, perhaps, the severest punishment an ingenuous mind can suffer. —

The next remarkable event of Abram's life is infinitely more honourable for him, and which therefore we pursue with much greater satisfaction. Being safely brought back again to Canaan, he resorts to his former residence between Bethel and Hai, and "pitches his tent by the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first." And there again he renews his communion with Heaven; for one failing breaks not off the intercourse between God and a good man. Enjoying here a temporary repose, his worldly substance increases fast upon him:

contemptible, no deviation from the path of rectitude a light thing. Let us watch most diligently on our weakest side: and let us learn from the patience, forbearance, and tender mercy of God, when “a brother is overtaken in a fault,” to “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.”

Had Abram an altar for God, before he had an habitation for himself? Learn from him, O young man, how to begin the world, as you wish to thrive and prosper in it. The house in which no altar is erected to God, wants both a foundation and a covering. The family which wants the word and the worship of God, is not yet begun to be furnished. Make room for your Maker, and he will settle you in a large place. “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things shall be added to you.”

Did Abram rule his own spirit, did he meekly recede from his just right, did he gently yield to an inferior, for the sake of peace? Blush, O man, to think of thy pride and selfishness; of thy positiveness in opinion, thy devotedness to interest, thy insolence in the day of power, thy contempt of the opinions, thy indifference to the feelings and the happiness of others. Look to Abram, and learn to be a conqueror. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Look to your Father in Heaven, who “is kind to the evil and unthankful:” “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” And thus “be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.”

Finally ; Was the word made to Abram sure ? Has his name become renowned, did his progeny increase, were his seed planted in the promised land, and in him are all the families of the earth blessed ? Then learn to honour God by reposing confidence in him, assured that, “ though heaven and earth “ pass away, his word shall not pass away.”

The next Lecture will carry on the History of Abram, “ the friend of God,” and exhibit the gradually opening discovery of the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ. The blessing of the Almighty we implore on what is past, and his assistance and blessing on what is to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE XI.

GENESIS XIII. 8.

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen : for we be brethren. .

THE History of Abram alone occupies a larger space in the Sacred Volume than that of the whole human race from the creation down to his day. Hitherto we have had rather sketches of character, than an exact delineation of the human heart; we have had hints, respecting remote important events, rather than an exact and connected narrative of facts. But the inspired Penman has gone into the *detail* of Abram's life, from his being called of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees, down to the day of his death ; a detail including the space of one hundred years. Moses marks with precision the succession of events which befel him ; unfolds his character on a variety of trying and interesting occasions ; and discloses the operations of a good mind through the course of a long life, adorned with many virtues and excellencies, yet not exempted from blemish and imperfection.

What renders the Scripture History in general, and that of our Patriarch in particular, useful and instructive, is, the exhibition of *private* life therein

presented to us, and the lessons of wisdom and virtue thereby taught to *ordinary* men. The intrigues of a court, the operations of a campaign, the consequences of a battle, the schemes of a statesman, the prowess of a hero, and the like, represented skilfully, and adorned with the charms of eloquence, may amuse or dazzle the reader. But the actors being altogether above our level, and the schemes entirely out of the line of our experience, though pleasure may, no great advantage can, result from acquaintance with them. To perform splendid actions, and to exhibit heroic virtue, is given but to a few ; and opportunities of this kind but seldom occur in the course of one life. Whereas occasions to practise generosity, justice, mercy, and moderation ; to speak truth and show kindness ; to melt with pity, and glow with affection ; to forbear and to forgive, are administered to us every step we move through the world, and recur more frequently upon us, than even the means of gratifying the common appetites of hunger and thirst. When, therefore, we behold men of like passions with ourselves, placed in situations exactly similar to our own, practising virtues within our reach, and discovering a temper and disposition which, if we please to cultivate, we may easily attain ; then, if we read not with profit as well as with delight, it must be, because we want not the power, but the inclination, to improve.

Abram has left his kindred and father's house at

God's command. Multitudes do the same thing every day, impelled by ambition, by avarice, by curiosity, or by a wandering, restless disposition. Happy is he, who, in removing, does not leave his religion behind him; and who in the midst of the employments or the delights of a new situation or place of residence, is not tempted to forget or to forsake the God of his native home, and of his early years. Alas, how often does this very metropolis prove the grave of virtuous sentiments, of religious principles, and of a regular education! Though Abram be but a pilgrim in Canaan, yet he thrives and prospers there. As the pious soul seeks and finds means of intercourse with Heaven in every condition and state of life, so God, who suffers none to lose by fidelity and attachment to him, can render the most untoward, unsettled, and dangerous condition, productive of real happiness; "if a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

But never do we find wealth flowing in, and increasing upon a man, without some corresponding peril or inconvenience—Either the mind is corrupted by it; or the possessor is exposed to be hated, envied, and plundered. The peace of Abram's family had nearly been disturbed, by a quarrel arising out of its prosperity; but it was preserved, by the good man's wisdom, moderation, and condescension. The officious zeal of meddling servants has well nigh embroiled their peaceable and kindly affectioned masters. "And there was a strife be-

“tween the herdmen of Abram’s cattle and the
“herdmen of Lot’s cattle ; and the Canaanite and
“the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.” How
can any one think of security and peace in this
world, when the rashness, malice, folly, or pride of
a domestic, may set a man at variance with his
chief friends ? Indeed we are vulnerable in exact
proportion to the extent of our possessions.

How great is Abram’s mind, how amiable his
conduct upon this occasion ! “And Abram said
“unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, be-
“tween me and thee, and between my herdmen
“and thy herdmen ; for we be brethren. Is not
“the whole land before thee ? Separate thyself, I
“pray thee, from me ; if thou wilt take the left
“hand, then will I go to the right : or if thou de-
“part to the right hand, then I will go to the left.”
Abram was the elder man ; he was to Lot in the
room of a father. Him had God distinguished by
special marks of his favour, and by the promises of
future greatness and pre-eminence. If the one must
give way to the other, who would not instantly
pronounce, that undoubtedly Lot ought to yield.
Might not the call and destination of God have been
warrantably pleaded as a reason why Abram should
have the first choice ? Abram, no doubt, both might
and could have asserted the preference ; and he
proves that he well deserved it, by giving it up.
What person in this assembly but stands reprov-
ed, or admonished, by the example of the Patriarch’s

humility, moderation, and affability? It is indeed a perfect contrast to that tenaciousness of their opinions, that punctilious adherence to the least iota of their rights, that inflexibility of self-love and self-conceit, that perpetual assumption or demand of preference and superiority, which mark the conduct of most men. Were it necessary to enforce the example of Abram by the precepts of the Gospel; the whole spirit of Christianity, a multitude of particular injunctions, and above all, the temper and conduct of the great pattern of all that is amiable and excellent, might be adduced, to expose and condemn, if not to cure, that selfish spirit, equally inconsistent with good sense and with religion, which exacts a perpetual sacrifice from others, without discerning the propriety or necessity, of making the slightest sacrifice to others in return. Permit me to recite a few passages on the subject.

“ For I say, through the grace given unto me, to
“ every man that is among you, not to think of
“ himself more highly than he ought to think, but
“ to think soberly, according as God hath dealt
“ to every man the measure of faith. For as we
“ have many members in one body, and all mem-
“ bers have not the same office: so we being many,
“ are one body in Christ, and every one members
“ one of another. Be kindly affectioned one to
“ another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring
“ one another. Be of the same mind one towards
“ another. Mind not high things, but condescend
“ to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own

“conceits. If it be possible, as much as lieth in
“you, live peaceably with all men.” Rom. xii. 3—
18. “Let nothing be done through strife or vain-
“glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem
“others better than themselves.” Phil. ii. 3. We
then that are strong, ought to “bear the infirmities
“of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let
“every one of us please his neighbour for his good
“to edification. For even Christ pleased not him-
“self, but as it is written, The reproaches of them
“that reproached thee fell on me. Now the God
“of patience and consolation grant you to be like-
“minded one towards another, according to Jesus
“Christ.” Rom. xv. 1—5. Thus have we precept
upon precept, pattern upon pattern, on a subject as
plain as the light at noon-day, and which is pre-
senting itself to us almost every hour we live. But
alas! it is not preaching that can confer the temper
of an Abram; and that can induce men to forego
the claims which pride and self-conceit are inces-
santly urging them to advance.

Behold then Abram and his nephew at length
constrained to separate. Nature, affection, religion,
affliction, had all conspired to unite them; but a
flow of worldly success dissolves their union; and
the old adage is exemplified in them, “relations
“sometimes agree best at a distance from each
“other.” The power of choosing was given to Lot,
and he exercised it accordingly; And Lot lifted up
“his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that
“it was well watered every where, before the Lord

“destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; even as the
“garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt; as
“thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all
“the plain of Jordan: and Lot journeyed east;
“and they separated themselves the one from the
“other.” Gen. xiii. 10, 11. How wisely this
choice was made, we shall have occasion to remark
in the sequel of the history.

So good a man, and a relation so kind, as Abram,
must sensibly have felt this separation from his
nearest kinsman. But whatever blank was made
in his happiness by the failing of this creature com-
fort, he has the consolation of reflecting, that it was
not brought upon him through his own fault; and
it is speedily and abundantly compensated by the
visions of the Almighty, by the promises of Him
who is faithful and true, and by the presence and
affection of that friend, who sticketh closer than a
brother. “And the Lord said unto Abram, after
“that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now
“thine eyes, and look from the place where thou
“art, northward, and southward, and eastward,
“and westward. For all the land which thou seest,
“to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.
“And I will make thy seed as the dust of the
“earth: so that if a man can number the dust of
“the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.
“Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it,
“and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto
“thee.” Gen. xiii. 14—17. There is something
delightfully soothing to the human heart in the

idea of property ;—one's own home, his own field, his own flock. If any thing can add to the satisfaction of this kind of possession, it is the having acquired it honourably, and the capacity of enjoying it with cheerfulness, wisdom, and moderation. Dishonest gain can never bestow contentment, and seldom descends to a remote heir. But the gratification of honest prosperity and success is capable of being still unspeakably heightened and sweetened ; namely, by the heart-composing spirit, the spirit-elevating consideration, that the blessing enjoyed is the gift of God ; that it is the pledge of paternal love, and the earnest of eternal felicity. In such happy circumstances did our Patriarch inhabit the plains of Mamre ; blessed in the present, more blessed in the prospects of futurity ; blessed in the fulness of this world, more blessed in the favour of God, which is better than life ; blessed in the promise of a numerous and prosperous offspring, infinitely more blessed in the promise of that holy seed in whom “ all the families of the “ earth are blessed.” When we find the good man still abiding in tents, a pilgrim and a stranger in Canaan, do we not perceive it written in legible characters, “ Arise ye and depart, for this is not “ your rest ?” Hear we not the voice of God, saying plainly, “ Seek ye another country, that is, an “ heavenly one ?”

But even the life of a pilgrim, and of a shepherd, is not secure ; neither does any worldly condition admit of a certain or long repose. Let a man be

ever so peaceably inclined, how easily may he be involved in the feuds of contentious neighbours? This was the case with Abram. In the fourteenth chapter of this sacred book, we have the history of a powerful confederacy of four kings against five; founded no doubt, as all such confederacies are, in a lust of power or wealth; or directed by a spirit of cruelty and revenge. It issues in a bloody conflict in the vale of Siddim. Sodom, where Lot had chosen to dwell, becomes a prey to the conqueror, and he himself is made a prisoner, and his goods are plundered. These facts are related by Moses, and become interesting to us, merely from their connexion with the history of Abram. What, but for this, are *Chederlaomer*, *Amraphel*, and *Arioch*, to the men of this day, but mere names? Lot must now have grievously felt the consequences of his imprudent choice of a place of residence, had it not been for the friendship and valour of his venerable uncle: who, roused by the intelligence of his nephew's distress and danger, flies instantly to his relief. Behold the good old man exchanging his shepherd's crook for the warrior's spear, and rushing with all the ardour and impetuosity of youth on the insulting victor. Which shall we most admire in this important and interesting transaction, the strength and eagerness of his natural affection; his honest indignation at violence and oppression; the skill with which he planned his enterprise, or the vigour, boldness, and intrepidity with which he executed it; the moderation with which he exercised

his victory ; his disinterestedness in declining any share of the fruits of it for himself ; or his justice and good faith in attending to, and supporting, the just rights of his allies ? All, all together, constitute an unequivocal and a brilliant proof, of a mind truly noble and dignified : and his conduct on this occasion suggests many reflections both pleasing and useful.

Remember, Christians, it is the same man who, for the sake of peace with a brother, gave up his just claim to a junior and an inferior, that was not afraid, in the cause of the injured and oppressed, to attack a numerous host, headed by princes, and flushed with victory. With whom then does true magnanimity reside ? Surely with the humble and condescending. The man who has subdued his own spirit is invincible. Behold in this the nature, and the foundation, of true courage. It is not to make light of life ; it is not “ to rush like the horse “ into battle ;” it is not to talk high swelling words of vanity : it is to fear God ; it is to be calm and composed in danger ; it is to possess hope beyond the grave ; it is to be superior to the pride, and incapable of the insulting triumph of success. Behold how the kindred graces and virtues delight to reside in unity and harmony, in the bosom of a good man ! Neither good nor bad qualities are to be found solitary in the breast of any one. Is a man pious ? Then he is humble. Is he humble ? Then, meek and condescending. Is he condescending ? Then bold, then just, then generous, then merciful.

Is he a child of God, a disciple of Jesus? Then, he is all that is amiable. Behold in Abram a soul superior to the love of riches, and consequently greater than a king; "And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Gen. xiv. 21—23. That integrity is incorruptible which considers life and happiness as consisting not in "the abundance of the things which a man possesseth:" which prizes an honest, though humble independence, above the honours and treasures which princes have to bestow.

Abram, on this occasion, is found in connexion with a most extraordinary person, who bursts upon us like the sun from behind a thick cloud, unveils his splendour for a moment, and then hides himself again in the shades of night: "Melchizedec, king of Salem, and priest of the Most High God;" whose appearance, history, and character, we could have hardly comprehended, had not a brighter day since arisen, and had not an inspired Apostle unfolded the meaning of what one inspired Prophet acted, and which another has recorded. The History of Melchizedec, short as it is, with the Apostolic comment upon it, will furnish materials for a

separate Lecture, and shall not now therefore be anticipated. The story of Abram himself shall for the present stand still, to be resumed and prosecuted in its order: it being now high time to look forward, and to bring that Patriarch, with those who went before him, to the feet of Jesus,—his “offspring;” yet his “root:” later than him by almost two thousand years; yet before him “of old, even from everlasting;” receiving existence from him in the order of nature, and by the tenour of the covenant; yet bestowing existence upon him as the eternal word, “by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that “is made.”

Abram may be first compared to Adam, being both the fathers of many nations, and especially constituted of God for that end. With both, the covenant of God was established, which included and involved their posterity, though the children were not as yet born: for with God, that is effected, which is purposed to be done; and his promises are gifts already bestowed. Adam's transgression transmitted evils innumerable to his offspring; Abram's faith entailed blessings unspeakable upon his family for many generations. Both of them typified Christ in their day; and both “saw his day afar off.” Abram may be compared with the princes and great men of the age in which he lived. And in true dignity of mind, in elevation of spirit, in generosity of sentiment, in propriety of behaviour, he will be found superior to most, and inferior to none. We

see kings receiving obligations from him ; while he nobly shows himself above receiving an obligation from any one. And Abram is a type of every real Christian, giving up the world as a portion, at God's command, and sacrificing the dearest delights of nature to the demands of duty ; living as a stranger upon earth, and looking for " a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

But the high venerability of Abram's character arises from his relation to Jesus Christ, whom he shadows forth in a great variety of respects. Abram was called and constituted of God, to be the natural head of a great and powerful nation ; Jesus, " the first-born among many brethren," to be the spiritual father of the whole vast family of believers. The covenant of God with Abram came in aid to the insufficiency of the first covenant ; which had become weak, and ineffectual to salvation, through the corruption of human nature ; and it prefigured a covenant still more sure and immoveable than itself, " established upon better promises," even the sending of " the Son of God, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin ; to condemn sin in the flesh." The prompt obedience of Abram to the call of Heaven, leads us directly to him, who says of himself, " My meat is to do the will of him who sent me," and the language of whose whole life, spirit, sufferings, and death is, " Father, not my will, but thine be done." Abram's appearing on the stage, and entering on the discharge of the du-

ties of his public character, in the full maturity of his age, suggests to us the Saviour of the world entering upon, and discharging his public ministry, in the full vigour of life, and flower of his age. When I behold Abram sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange country, I think of him, who "came to his own and his own received him not;" and meditate on "the Son of Man, who had not where to lay his head." Abram, chased into Egypt by famine, reminds us of Jesus flying into Egypt from the wrath of a jealous and incensed king. Who can read of Abram discomfiting confederate princes, without bethinking himself straight of the triumphs of a Redeemer over "principalities and powers, and the ruler of the darkness of this world:" Satan, sin, and death "cast into the lake of fire." When we behold Lot brought back from captivity, by the kindness and intrepidity of his affectionate kinsman, can we refrain from turning our eyes to our compassionate Elder Brother, who "through death has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were subject to bondage;" and who has restored his younger brethren to "the glorious liberty of the sons of God?" Abram nobly refuses to be made rich by the bounty of the king of Sodom; thus when the Jews would have taken Christ and made him a king, he withdrew himself: and when the prince of the power of the air presented him with the prospect of the kingdoms of the world and

the glory of them, and proffered all to him on condition of his doing homage for them, he rejected the offer with disdain, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The amiable qualities of Abram's mind bear a lively resemblance to the spirit that dwelt in our divine Master. But in Abram it was a spirit imparted, in Jesus a spirit inherent; it was bestowed on the former in measure, on the latter it was poured out without measure; in the Patriarch it was mingled with dross, alloyed by a mixture of human imperfection; in the Saviour it was unmixed, unalloyed, for "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips."

But the time would fail to enumerate all the marks of resemblance. Many others will occur to the careful and attentive reader of Abram's history; these shall for the present suffice from this place. The farther continuation of it shall be suspended, and give way, according to the order of the narration, and to give these exercises all the advantage of variety which their nature will admit, to the singular history of Melchizedec; which, God willing, shall be the subject of the ensuing Lecture, and to which permit me to implore your patient and candid attention. Earnestly praying that the blessing of the Most High may crown what has been spoken, we ascribe praise to his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE XII.

GENESIS XIV. 18.

And Melchizedec King of Salem brought forth bread and wine :
and he was the priest of the Most High God.

PSALM CX. 4.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for
ever, after the order of Melchizedec.

HEBREWS VI. 20.

————— Jesus, made an High Priest for ever, after the
order of Melchizedec.

THE eagerness and avidity with which men pry into abstruse and difficult subjects, can be exceeded only by their coldness and indifference to obvious and important truth. The religious controversies which have engaged so much attention, occupied so much time, and furnished employment for so many rare talents ; which have whetted the tempers, and too often the swords of men against each other, are, in general, on points of doctrine too deep and mysterious ever to be fathomed by human understanding, too lofty to be scanned without boldness and presumption, or too trifling to merit regard. Revealed religion, like every thing that is of God, must necessarily present many difficulties to a crea-

ture so limited as man. But instead of being rejected on that account, it is the more to be prized and revered; as having this evidence, among many others, of coming from Him, whose nature, whose works, and whose ways, none "can find out unto perfection." Curiosity, guided by humility, and aiming at useful discovery, is a laudable and useful principle. But curiosity impelled by self-conceit, and resting in mere speculation, is generally rash and presumptuous, often trifling, impertinent, and contemptible. In every branch of knowledge, those truths are the most valuable, which are the plainest, and which present themselves in the greatest abundance: just as nature produces in the greatest profusion, those commodities which are most useful and necessary to human life.

The subject of this night's Lecture is one of those which have afforded ample employment to critics and commentators. Were our object amusement only, it were easy to entertain you for months to come, with the ingenious, the fanciful, the absurd, and nonsensical expositions which have been given of the person and history of Melchizedec. But as we aim at usefulness, and acknowledge no guide in sacred things but the holy Scripture, Moses shall be our only authority and guide in tracing this remarkable story; David and Paul our only interpreters in the application and use of it.

Abram, with a little band of three hundred and eighteen persons of his own household, and a few friends, has pursued, overtaken, surprised, and dis-

conquered four confederated kings, with their victorious army; and has recovered Lot, his brother's son, into liberty. Returning from this honourable, bold, and successful enterprise, he is met by a prince of a very different character from those whom he had conquered, and from those whom he had delivered. *They* were sons of violence; sons of blood; *his name* was Melehizedec, and Melchisalem,—king of righteousness, king of peace. It is extremely probable, that these epithets were titles conferred upon this great and good man, as being descriptive of his person and character; and might be designed of Providence as a memorial to all princes of what they ought to be; lovers, preservers, and promoters of justice, maintainers and conservators of peace.

It is pleasing to find ourselves mistaken in our calculations of the numbers of good men, and in our estimates of the state of religion in the world. For these calculations and estimates, through ignorance and contractedness of spirit, are generally, if not always, erroneous, by being short of the truth. Who did not conclude, when Abram was called to leave his idolatrous country, that the knowledge and the worship of the true God were entirely confined to his family? When lo! A king and priest of the Most High God, of whom we never heard, of whose existence we had formed no conception before, breaks forth upon us all at once; and teaches us this most elevating, this most encouraging truth, that the number of the redeemed is much greater, and

the state of religion much more prosperous, than the partial views, and the systematic spirit of even good men, will permit them to believe. Thus, in later times, a prophet of no less dignity than Elijah, from apparent circumstances, made a most erroneous computation of the number of the faithful in his day. "The children of Israel," saith he, "have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 1 Kings xix. 14. But what saith the answer of God to him? "I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." Verse 18. And when the ransomed of the Lord shall at length return together to Sion, they shall be "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." And what heart but must exult in the prospect of the grace of God being more widely diffused than we apprehended, and extended to regions unknown, and multitudes unthought of by us?

Though but little be told us of this extraordinary person, that little is both pleasing and instructive. In him, we find united two offices of high dignity and respectability—royalty and the priesthood; the majesty of the one united to the sanctity of the other; Melchizedec, "king of Salem," was also "the priest of the Most High God." How truly honourable is high station, when supported by the beauty and dignity of holiness, and adorned with

unaffected goodness! Is the state of a king either dishonoured or diminished by attendance at the altar of God? No; It is religion that sweetens, that embellishes, that ennobles every condition; it is religion, forming an intimate, and a permanent relation between a man and his God, "that raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, and setteth him with princes;" and which exalteth earthly princes to heavenly thrones. Examples are rare in history of these two characters being united. The kingdoms and the priesthood of this world fall to the lot of but a selected few; they hardly blend in one and the same person, seldom meet to crown the same head. But in the new creation of God. in "the kingdom prepared for the heirs of glory from the foundation of the world," the high lot of Melchizedec is the lot of every child of God. All are "kings and priests unto God, even the Father." And the Apostle Peter, addressing, not the princes and potentates of the earth, but "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," thus writes, "Ye are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Pet. ii. 9.

Is this king of righteousness and peace venerable in his priestly robes, attending, in the order of his course, upon the Most High God? Is he less

amiable and respectable in administering to the necessities of his fellow men? A prince is never more kingly, than when he is practising the virtues of humanity, hospitality, and compassion. And the praise of these too belongs to Melchizedec, for “he brought forth bread and wine” to refresh the Patriarch and his little army, after the labour and fatigue of their rapid march and violent conflict. The great God is infinitely above the need of our services. How then can we honour him most, and serve him best? By copying his example; by doing good; by communicating to the comfort of others what he has kindly bestowed upon us. What object does this world present, once to be compared with a human being replete with benevolence, habitually studying to glorify his Creator, by alleviating the distresses, and promoting the happiness of his fellow-creatures? This is the true lustre of riches, this is the glory of greatness, this is the splendour of power, this the majesty of kings.

Kindred spirits are readily and powerfully attracted to each other; and religion forms the strongest and tenderest bond of union among men. Abram and Melchizedec meet like men long acquainted. The Patriarch nobly disdains to accept the spoils proffered to him by the king of Sodom; but joyfully, and with gratitude, embraces the friendship and kindness of the king of Salem. The gifts of a bad man yield a very mixed satisfaction to an honest mind, but it is pleasing to the soul, to receive benefits from the wise and good. An interchange of

kind offices is the life of friendship in worthy minds. In our commerce with Heaven, benefits flow continually from God to us ; continually receiving, we have nothing to send back, but the effusions of a thankful heart, and the humble desires of needy dependents ; but friendship among men subsists only among equals, and depends on kindness mutually given and received. Melchizedec, “ brings forth “ bread and wine ” to Abram ; Abram gives him “ tithes of all. ” So early existed in the world that mode of supporting the ministers of religion. A great prince like Melchizedec needed not to minister in holy things for hire, but he would by his example teach mankind what God by a special constitution established under the law, and afterwards delivered to the world in a general proposition, that “ he who “ serves at the altar should live by the altar. ”

But how poor in comparison, is the gift which the Patriarch brings to the Priest of God, to that which he receives from him. Abram's is an offering of acknowledgment and respect merely, by which the receiver was neither benefited nor enriched, but Melchizedec's return to him was a real benefit ; he “ blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the “ Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth. ” Abram *was* already blessed, in growing worldly prosperity, blessed in recent victory over his enemies, blessed in the deliverance he had wrought for his beloved nephew, blessed in possessing the respect and esteem of princes ; but blessings like these have fallen to the lot of bad men, and are in themselves

unsatisfactory : Melchizedec pronounces a blessing which crowns all the rest, and gives value to them all. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and "he addeth no sorrow therewith ; Abram is blessed "of the most High God," with the prospect, though distant, of the Messiah's day, who should spring from himself, according to the flesh, and in whom
"all the families of the earth should be blessed." Abram beheld in the very person who pronounced the benediction upon him, "the figure of him who "was to come," that "king who should reign in "righteousness ;" "he saw it, and was glad." What selfish, solitary joy, is once to be named with the pure, benevolent delight, which glowed in the Patriarch's breast, every time the promise was brought to his ear, and the Saviour, his own Saviour, the Saviour of the world, was placed before his eye ? "And blessed be the Most High God," continues he, "which hath delivered thine enemies into thine "hand." Gen. xiv. 20. The blessing which cometh down from Heaven ascends, together with its fruit, to Heaven again, as the precious drops which fall down to water the earth, rise upward in gales of fragrance, from the fruits and flowers which they produce, and which perfume the air. "Mercy is twice "blessed ; it blesseth him that gives, and him that "takes." But behold, while Melchizedec yet blesseth Abram, he is out of our sight, and is no more to be found. He burst forth upon us like the sun from behind a dark cloud ; disappeared again as quickly ; and is to be discerned only in that track

of glory which he has left behind him. Blessed type of him, who “led out his disciples as far as to Bethany, and he lift up his hands and blessed them. “And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he “was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven :” And who, “while they beheld, was taken “up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

Thus all the men of ages past, have made their escape from us, and we behold them no more : and thus we ourselves are, one by one, disappearing from among men. Adam, and the great majority, died. Enoch, and one more, were translated without tasting death. The latter end of Melchizedec is concealed from us. But, from his extraordinary character, we are led to imagine, it could not be in the ordinary course of humanity. In so many various ways can God remove and dispose of his creatures ; and thus, through various passages, we enter into the world of spirits : and “mortality is swallowed “up of life.”

What other of the kings of the earth is to be compared with Melchizedec ? Is he not rather raised up of Providence, to reproach and to condemn the potentates of this world ; the rule of whose government, too often, is not righteousness in law, but humour and caprice ; and the end of it, not to bless mankind, but to gratify some passion of their own ; who, instead of preserving the nations in peace, themselves the sons of peace, have incessantly from the beginning, to this unhappy day, involved the

wretched human race in scenes of war, and violence, and blood? To which of the earthly thrones shall we look for the union of the sanctity of the priesthood with the majesty of the sovereign? Alas! Kings are "set in slippery places." Their education, their station, their employments, their connexions; all, all unhappily encroach upon the offices of religion; tend to weaken its impressions, and to shut out its consolations. But there is a Prince, betwixt whom and this king of Salem the resemblance is so striking, that he who runs may trace it.

Not a few have given into the opinion, that the wonderful personage represented in this history, under the united character of priest and king, was none other than the Son of God himself, assuming a temporary human form, to exhibit in that dark age of the world an anticipated view of the person, which he was, in the fulness of time, to assume, of the characters which he was to sustain, and of the offices which he was to execute. The expressions which describe Melchizedec, it is alleged, are not applicable to any creature: and as, from several other passages in the books of Moses, it is probable, if not certain, that the Redeemer of the world manifested himself in the patriarchal ages, at sundry times, and on divers occasions, under the character of the *Angel of the Lord*; it is apprehended, that this appearance to Abram might be of the same nature; in order to furnish the father of believers with a clearer and more distinct idea of the person of the

Redeemer, according to the words of Christ himself, "Your father Abram rejoiced to see my day : and "he saw it, and was glad." John viii. 56.

I see no danger that can result, either to faith or morality, from admitting this supposition. And it must be admitted, that there are circumstances both in the history, and in the apostolical application of it, which sufficiently warrant such an interpretation. If there is not an actual identity of persons in Melchizedec and the Messiah, the analogy at least is so obvious, that we have but to bring Moses and Paul together, in order to discover its exactness, and to feel its force. The likeness is presented to us in Scripture, not as some others, in scanty and obscure hints, or in some leading features and lineaments only ; but the portraits are drawn, as it were, at full length, by the masterly hands of a Prophet and of an Apostle, and placed side by side for our inspection. In this part of our undertaking, therefore, nothing more is necessary than to transcribe from the page of inspiration.

Scripture is singularly expressive, both in what it speaks of Melchizedec, and in what it conceals ; and in both these respects we may in some measure understand the meaning of what David in spirit says of the Messiah, "Thou art a priest for ever, after "the order of Melchizedec." And first,

To whom can the *names* of king of righteousness, king of peace, be applied with such strict propriety, as to him whom God hath "anointed over his holy "hill of Sion," who reigns in justice and in love :

who, righteous himself, has wrought out for all his happy subjects a justifying righteousness by the merit of his blood, and continues to work out in all a sanctifying righteousness by the grace and power of his Spirit?

But *peace* and *righteousness* are not mere external designations of Messiah, our prince; names without a meaning, titles without merit, like many of those which are worn by the potentates of this world, *Catholic, Most Christian, Faithful, Imperial, Defender of the Faith!* Appellations calculated to excite pity or derision. No: his titles are of the essence of his nature; the display of them is the object of his mission, and the consummation of his plan. "His name shall be called the Prince of *Peace*." "Of the increase of his government, and *peace*, there shall be no end." Isaiah ix. 6, 7. In "Christ Jesus, we, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our *peace*, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us:" "He came and preached *peace* to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh." Eph. ii. 13—17. "The chastisement of our *peace* was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah liii. 5. His gospel is prophesied of, as God's "*covenant of peace*" and "*the counsel of peace*." At his birth the melodious anthem of "*peace on earth, and good will towards men*," ascended from the tongues of ten thousand angels, up to the eternal throne: and when he left the world, this bequest,

more precious than the mantle of Elijah, fell from him, and remained behind him to bless mankind, "*Peace* I leave with you, *my peace* I give unto you:" peace with God, peace of conscience, peace with all men; for, "being justified by faith, we have peace "with *God* through our Lord Jesus Christ." And "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but "righteousness, and *peace*, and joy in the Holy "Ghost." Acquaintance with God through him produces inward tranquillity. "Acquaint now thy- "self with him, and be at *peace*; thereby good "shall come unto thee." And "if God be for us, "who can be against us?" "The *peace* of God "passeth all understanding." The world can neither give it nor take it away. And when his Gospel shall have produced its full effect, and his kingdom is finally established; "the work of *righteous-* "ness shall be *peace*;" "and the effect of *righteous-* "ness, *quietness* and assurance for ever."

But it were endless to enumerate the passages of Scripture, which represent Jesus Christ the Saviour as the author, the purchaser, the giver, the operator of *peace*, and the "Lord our *righteousness*." They are his nature, his name; the burthen of his preaching, of his prayers: they are the fruit of his sufferings and death, the object of his intercession, the operation of his Spirit: they are the seeds of glory in his redeemed upon earth; and the perfection of glory in him and in them, when the triumph of his grace shall be completed in Heaven.

As the *names* and *titles* ascribed to Melchizedec,

apply in full force, and in their utmost extent to our blessed Saviour, so the several *actions* in which we find him engaged have their exact counterpart, in what Jesus *did*, in the exercises of his public ministry. They are these three—"he brought forth "bread and wine" to refresh Abram and his weary host; he "blessed Abram;" and he received of him "tithes of all" the spoils.

In the first of these we are led to contemplate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he exerted, more than once, his almighty power, in miraculously multiplying bread to refresh and sustain the fainting multitudes, who resorted to hear him: and when he instituted, by taking, blessing, and distributing bread and wine, that memorial of his death, which has been in every age, and shall continue to the end of the world, the food of the hungry soul, and a cordial to the faint; the token of a salvation already wrought out and purchased; and the foretaste of a salvation "ready to be revealed;" the communion of imperfect saints, in the church militant, and the eternal bond of union among the spirits of just men made perfect, in the church triumphant.

Again Melchizedec *blessed* Abram. In this action of the king of Salem, we behold Jesus, "who went "about doing good," and scattered blessings whosoever he went. "He took little children into his "arms and *blessed* them." He pronounced a *blessing*, which still rests on the "poor in spirit," "the "meek," "the merciful," "the pure in heart,"

“ the peace-makers,” and those “ who hunger and thirst after righteousness.” He *blessed* the bread before he brake it, and gave it to his disciples : when he ascended up on high, blessings upon blessings flowed from his lips ; and in virtue of his intercession at the right hand of the Father “ every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights.” If the world has any comfort, if the soul has any hope ; if there be any communication between heaven and earth, if there be “ good will towards men ;” “ if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any bowels and mercies ;” if there be any joy purer and more perfect than another, “ the *blessing* of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith ;” it is from him whom “ God having raised up, even his Son Jesus, sent him to *bless* you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” But the grand accomplishment of the type is reserved for that day, when, together with faithful Abraham, all “ the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads :” when “ the Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” shall thus welcome his redeemed to the regions of eternal day, “ Come, ye *blessed* of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

The last of Melchizedec's *actions* that stand upon record, is his *receiving* the *tithe* of the spoils from Abram. On which subject, I think it best to give

you the Apostle's commentary in his own words. "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the Patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to *take* tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose descent is not counted from them, *received* tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receives tithes, payed tithes in Abraham; for he was yet in the loins of his Father when Melchizedec met him." Heb. vii. 4—10. From which he justly infers, that "perfection" could not be "by the Levitical priesthood," that "there was need" of "another priest" after the order of Melchizedec, and not after the order of Aaron; who should be "made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life;" and that seeing the law made nothing perfect, "but the bringing in of a better hope did," "by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament:" and "this man because he continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood." Through him, therefore, let us offer "the calves of our lips," and "present" our "best" as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,

“ which is our reasonable service,” for “ we are not
“ our own, we are bought with a price;” therefore,
“ let us glorify God in our body, and in our spirit,
“ which are God’s.”

As the *names* and *employments*, so the *united offices* and dignity of Melchizedec, met in all their lustre in the person of the Son of God: “ *King* of
“ *Salem*,” and “ *Priest* of the Most High God.” In “ derision” of the vain attempts of the heathen, and of the impious confederacy of the kings and rulers of the earth, “ against the LORD, and against
“ his anointed,” God declares, “ I have set *my king*
“ upon my holy hill of *Zion*.” Psalm ii. 6. He came not indeed in worldly pomp, but in lowliness and meekness, yet the powers and potentates of the earth were made subject and subservient to him. “ Wise men from the east” were conducted by a star to Jerusalem, and thence to Bethlehem of Judah, to do homage to him at his birth; and poured
“ their treasures, gold, frankincense, and myrrh,” at his feet. Augustus issued “ a decree that all the
“ world should be taxed.” What was his motive, what his end? We cannot tell; but we know the end which God had in view by it; namely, to bring into more public notoriety the several circumstances of Christ’s nativity, and to transmit them to the latest posterity in all their splendour and importance. Thus the haughty Master of Imperial Rome was constrained of Providence, to render unknown, unintended, involuntary homage to yonder babe in the stable at Bethlehem. “ For of a truth against

“thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed,
 “both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles
 “and the people of Israel, were gathered together,
 “for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel
 “determined before to be done.” Acts iv. 27, 28.
 Is he not then, “the blessed and only potentate;
 “the King of kings and Lord of lords?” Now
 especially, exalted as he is to the right hand of the
 Majesty on high. For by “him were all things
 “created that are in heaven, and that are in earth,
 “visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or
 “dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things
 “were created by him and for him.” “And he is
 “before all things, and by him all things consist.”
 And into the kingdom of his glory, when finished,
 “the kings of the earth do bring their glory and
 “honour.” Then shall angels and men join in
 this grand celestial chorus, “The kingdoms of this
 “world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and
 “of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

But while his exalted rank as a *sovereign* removes
 us to an awful distance; his milder character “as
 “the Apostle and the *High Priest* of our profes-
 “sion,” allures us back to his presence, and dissi-
 pates our terrors. He is “a merciful and a faithful
 “*High Priest*,” an “*High Priest*, touched with
 “the feeling of our infirmities:” “a great *High*
 “*Priest*, that is passed into the heavens,” through
 whom we have encouragement to “come boldly
 “unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain
 “mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Heb. iv. 16. He has by "one offering perfected
"for ever them that are sanctified," and who having
"washed us from our sins in his own blood," shall
at length make us "kings and priests unto God and
"his Father. To him be glory and dominion for
"ever and ever."

The circumstances relating to Melchizedec, which
are *concealed*, no less than those which are *revealed*
to us, lead directly to similar circumstances in the
person and character of our Lord. "Without father,
"without mother, without descent; having neither
"beginning of days nor end of life:" no predecessor;
no successor; no limited time of service; no derived
title; a dignity not passing from hand to hand, but
permanent, inherent, immutable. Such was the
type. What is its antitype? "Who shall declare
"his generation?" "In the beginning was the
"Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word
"was God." "Verily, verily I say unto you, Be-
"fore Abraham was, I am." "And the word was
"made flesh, and dwelt among us, [and we beheld
"his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the
"Father,] full of grace and truth." "Without con-
"troversy great is the mystery of godliness: God
"was manifest in the flesh." "I am Alpha and
"Omega, the first and the last; I am he that liveth
"and was dead: and behold I am alive for ever
"more, Amen." "Behold the Lamb of God which
"taketh away the sin of the world!" "Slain from
"the foundation of the world!" The altar which

consecrateth "the gift," the priest that presents the sacrifice; the "second temple" which eclipses the glory of the "first." All, and in all. Every thing pointed to him; all ended in him, and all are infinitely exceeded by him.

"Rejoice, Christians, in this "more sure word "of prophecy;" and "take heed unto it, as unto "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day "dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." Revere the unfathomable depths of the eternal mind. "Secret things belong to God; but things which "are revealed belong to us and to our children." Turn all your iniquities to some good account, remembering that "the end of the commandment is "charity," it is to inspire veneration and love to God, and good will to men. Seek not to be "wise "above what is written:" and "be not wise in your "own conceit." In reverence adore an incomprehensible Jehovah, who by no search is to be "found "out unto perfection." Rejoice in hope of that day, when all mysteries shall be unveiled, and the wisdom, the love, and the goodness of God shall shine conspicuously in every creature and every event; when the honours of a Melchizedec shall be communicated to all and every one of the myriads of Christ's redeemed. When, such as is the head shall all the members be, "*kings and priests* unto God." And let us, "by patient continuance in well-doing, "seek for glory, and honour, and immortality." Amen.

LECTURE XIII.

GENESIS XV. 17, 18.

And it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.

THERE is something awfully pleasant, in tracing the manners and customs of ancient times, and of distant nations; particularly in the celebration of their religious ceremonies. Religion, in every age and nation, has been the foundation of good faith, and of mutual confidence among men. The most solemn conventions, and the most explicit declarations, have been considered as imperfect, till the oath of God was interposed, and until the other august sanctions of divine worship ratified and confirmed the transaction. It cannot but be a high gratification to every lover of the holy Scriptures, to find in the Bible the origin, and the model, of all the significant religious rites of later ages, and of remoter nations; to find in Moses, the pattern of usages described by a Homer and a Titus Livius, as in general practice among the two most respectable and enlightened nations of antiquity, the Greeks and Romans.

Making of covenants is one of the most frequent and customary transactions in the history of mankind. Controversies and quarrels of every sort issued at length in a covenant between the contending parties. The solemn compacts which have taken place between God and man are known by the same name; and have been confirmed by similar forms and ceremonies. The word translated to *make* a covenant, in all the three learned languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; that is, according to the uniform application of it in the Old Testament, and the constant phrasology of the most approved Greek and Roman authors, signifies to *cut*, to separate by cutting asunder, to *strike* down. The word translated *covenant*, in the original Hebrew, according as we derive it from one of two words of similar form and sound, signifies either a *purifier*, that is a purifying victim; and the phrase, to *make a covenant* will import, to *kill, strike, cut off, a purifying victim*; or it may signify a grant of favour, a deed of gift freely bestowed and solemnly ratified by the Most High God. And according to this derivation it imports, that the party with whom it is made, is put into a new and happier state. Between man and man, it denotes a new arrangement of certain concerns common to both, whereby they are put upon a clearer and surer foundation than they were before. Now the order and form of Abram's sacrifice, described in the ninth and tenth verses of this chapter, is a full illustration of the meaning of the words. "And he
" said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years

“ old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram
“ of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young
“ pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and di-
“ vided them in the midst, and laid each piece one
“ against another: but the birds divided he not.”
And in the text, “ the Lord made a covenant,” i. e.
he *cut asunder* or *divided a purifying* victim. Abram,
according to God’s command, took an heifer, a she
goat, and a ram, each of three years old, slew them;
divided each into equal parts; placed the separated
limbs opposite to each other, leaving a passage be-
tween; passed between the parts himself, according
to the custom of the sacrifice; and when the sun
was down, that the appearance might be more visi-
ble and striking, the *shechinah*, or visible token of
God’s presence, passed also between the divided
limbs of the victims, as “ a smoking furnace, and
“ a burning lamp;” the final ratification of this new
treaty between God and Abram. By this new co-
venant God graciously became bound to give Abram
a son of his own loins, who should become the father
of a great nation, and be the progenitor, after the
flesh, of the great Saviour and deliverer of the human
race; and Abram on his part, bound himself to a
firm reliance upon all God’s promises, and a cheer-
ful obedience to all his commands. Such were the
awful solemnities of this important transaction.
What mysteries were contained in these sacred rites,
we pretend not to unfold. They were evidently of
divine institution, for God honoured them with his
presence, approbation, and acceptance. They ap-

parently had been long in use before this period ; for Abram, without any particular instruction, prepares and performs the sacrifice ; and they certainly continued long in the church of God after this ; for we find the practice as far down as the times of Jeremiah, that is about the period of the dissolution of the Jewish monarchy. The passage in this prophet to which we refer, describes so minutely these ancient religious customs, and so strikingly illustrates and supports the history of Abram's covenant and sacrifice, that you will forgive my quoting it at full length. "This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, after that the king Zedekiah had made a *covenant* with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them. That every man should let his man servant, and every man his maid servant, being an Hebrew, or an Hebrewess, go free, that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother. Now when all the princes, and all the people which had entered into the *covenant*, heard that every one should let his man servant, and every one his maid servant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go. But afterwards, they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids. Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, I *made a covenant* with your fathers,

“ in the day that I brought them forth out of the
 “ land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen,
 “ saying, At the end of seven years, let ye go
 “ every man his brother, an Hebrew which hath
 “ been sold unto thee ; and when he hath served
 “ thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from
 “ thee : but your fathers hearkened not unto me,
 “ neither inclined their ear. And ye were now turn-
 “ ed, and had done right in my sight, in proclaim-
 “ ing liberty every man to his neighbour, and ye had
 “ made a covenant before me in the house which is
 “ called by my name. But ye turned, and polluted
 “ my name, and caused every man his servant, and
 “ every man his handmaid, whom he had set at li-
 “ berty at their pleasure, to return, and brought
 “ them into subjection, to be unto you for servants
 “ and for handmaids. Therefore thus saith the
 “ Lord, Ye have not hearkened unto me, in pro-
 “ claiming liberty every one to his brother, and
 “ every man to his neighbour : behold, I proclaim a
 “ liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to
 “ the pestilence, and to the famine ; and I will make
 “ you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the
 “ earth. And I will give the men that have trans-
 “ gressed my covenant, which have not performed
 “ the words of the covenant which they had made
 “ before me, when they cut the calf in twain and
 “ passed between the parts thereof, the princes of
 “ Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs,
 “ and the priests, and all the people of the land,
 “ which passed between the parts of the calf ; I will

“ even give them into the hand of their enemies, and
“ into the hand of them that seek their life; and their
“ dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the
“ heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.” Jer. xxxiv. 8—20. Now the expressions here employed, of
“ polluting God’s name, transgressing his covenant,
“ and not performing it,” and the threatened punishment of this violation, “ their dead bodies shall be
“ for meat unto the fowls of the Heaven, and to the
“ beasts of the earth,” explain to us in some measure the meaning of those solemn ceremonies with which covenants were usually executed. And here surely it is not unlawful to employ the lights which are thrown on this subject by the practice of the Gentile nations, and from the writings of those who are styled profane authors. From them we learn, that on such occasions the custom was, that the contracting party or parties, having passed between the divided limbs of the sacrifice, and expressed their full assent to the stipulated terms of the agreement or covenant, in solemn words which were pronounced with an audible voice, imprecated upon themselves a bitter curse, if they ever should violate it. “ As I strike down
“ this heifer, or ram, so may God strike me with
“ death, if I transgress my word and oath.” “ As the
“ limbs of this animal are divided asunder, so may
“ my body be torn to pieces, if I prove perfidious.” Permit me to present one instance, of many, from the two illustrious nations alluded to. The Greeks and the Trojans, according to Homer, having agreed to determine the great quarrel between them, by

the issue of a single combat between the two rivals, Menelaus and Paris, the terms being solemnly adjusted and consented to on both sides, the ratification of the covenant is thus described, *Iliad*, lib. iii.

268. [A] The Grecian Prince drew the sacred knife, cut off a lock of wool from each of the heads of the devoted lambs, which being distributed among the princes of the contending parties, he thus, with hands lifted up, and in a loud voice, prayed; "O Father Jove, most glorious, most mighty: O sun, who seest and hearest every thing: ye rivers, thou earth, and ye powers who in the regions below punish the false and perjured, be ye witnesses, and preserve this covenant unviolated;" then, having repeated the words of the covenant in the audience of all, he cleft asunder the heads of the consecrated lambs, placed their palpitating limbs opposite to each other on the ground, poured sacred wine upon them, and again prayed, or rather imprecated: "O Jupiter Almighty, most glorious, and ye other immortals! Whoever shall first transgress his solemn oath, may his brains, and those of his children, flow upon the ground like this wine, and let his wife be divided from him and given to another."

Thus when it was agreed to settle the contest for empire between Rome and Alba by the combat of three youths, brothers, on either side; after the interposition of ceremonies similar to those which have been described, the Roman Priest who presided, addressed a prayer to Heaven to this effect, "Hear, Father Jupiter; hear, Prince of Alba, and

“ye whole Alban nation. Whatever has been read
“from that waxen tablet, from first to last, accord-
“ing to the plain meaning of the words, without
“any reservation whatever, the Roman people en-
“gage to stand to, and will not be the first to vio-
“late. If with a fraudulent intention, and by an
“act of the state, they shall first transgress, that
“very day, O Jupiter, strike the Roman people,
“as I to-day shall strike this hog, and so much the
“more heavily, as you are more mighty and more
“powerful than I am.” And having thus spoken,
with a sharp flint, he dashed out the brains of the
animal.

Thus, in the three most distinguished nations
that ever existed, we find the origin of their great-
ness, in similar ceremonies; empire founded in re-
ligion, and good faith secured by the sanction of
solemn sacred rites. And is it not pleasing to find
the living and true God, as in respect of majesty
and dignity, so in priority of time, taking the lead
of all that is great and venerable among men. We
find Moses, the prince of sacred writers, describing
a religious sacrifice performed by Abram one thou-
sand nine hundred and thirteen years before Christ,
which the prince of heathen poets so exactly de-
scribes as the practice of his own country upwards of
one thousand years later; and which the great
Roman historian relates as in use among his country-
men, in the time of Tullus Hostilius, the third king
of Rome, before Christ about six hundred and
sixty-eight years.

The circumstances of this interesting transaction have led me much farther than I intended; I now return to take up the thread of my narration. Abram having returned from the slaughter of the kings; having achieved the deliverance of Lot his brother's son from captivity; having paid tithes to Melchizedec, the type and representative of the Great High Priest over the household of God, perhaps the Son of God himself, thus early exhibited in human nature, to the world; having received the blessing from him, and bidden him farewell, retires again to the quietness and privacy of domestic life, humbly confiding in the divine protection, and patiently waiting the accomplishment of the promises. The man who habitually seeks God, readily and happily finds him. "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Gen. xv. 1. The din of war, and the gratulations of victory, these transitory and perturbed occupations and comforts, being over, intercourse with Heaven recommences and improves: the still small voice of divine favour is again heard. "Fear not, I am thy shield." Abram was become the dread of one confederacy of princes, and the envy of another; both of them situations full of danger; but his security is the protection of the Almighty. He scorned to be made rich by the generosity of the king of Sodom: and his magnanimity and disinterestedness are recompensed by the bounty of the great Lord of all, "I am thy

"exceeding great reward." Why should we curiously inquire after the nature of the heavenly vision, and ask in what manner the word of the Lord came unto him? Know we not the secret, the inexplicable, the irresistible power which God possesses and exercises over the bodies, and over the minds of men? Know we not what it is to blush for our follies, though no eye behold us; to tremble under the threatenings of a guilty conscience, though no avenger be pursuing: and to enjoy serenity and peace, in the midst of confusion and tempest? Whence is this, but from the word of the Lord within us, constraining or encouraging us to hear?

This renewed declaration of the divine favour, draws from Abram a dutiful, yet pathetic expostulation, on the condition of his family and affairs; in which the impatience and fretfulness of the man, mingle with the submission and resignation of the believer. He was grown rich and respected; he had been victorious over his enemies, and become a blessing to his friends; but he is sinking into the vale of years, and his great possessions are ready to descend to a stranger, Eliezer Damascus, the steward of his household. Is it any wonder to see a proud, unmortified Haman dissatisfied, though basking in the sunshine of royal favour, because one Mordecai sits in the king's gate, when a pious Abram feels uneasy in the enjoyment of all this world could bestow, because one thing was withheld? Alas, what condition of humanity is ex-

empted, for any length of time together, from sorrow and vexation of spirit? How much of the affliction of the remainder of Abram's life, arose from the possession of that blessing, which he now coveted so earnestly! But surely we should do but slender justice to the holy man, in supposing that the sentiments which he expressed upon this occasion were merely the effect of a natural desire of having children, of his own body, to whom his large possessions might descend. The man who rejoiced in the prospect of the Saviour's day; the man who was ready at God's command to offer up Isaac in sacrifice; the man who had given up every thing nature holds dear, when duty called him to it; and who took the simple promise of God as a full indemnification; such a man must in charity be presumed to entertain the most liberal and disinterested views, in thus ardently desiring a son. We hear of no disapprobation expressed against his ardour and impatience; on the contrary, it procures from God a more distinct and decisive promise of the speedy accomplishment of his wishes: "and behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." The time, though not the manner, of the vision is fully conveyed to us: it was early in the morning, while it was yet dark, for "he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall

“thy seed be.” Scripture allusions to natural objects are adapted to the ordinary conceptions of mankind. The sun is represented as rising, and setting, and moving round the earth; and the stars are represented as innumerable, because this is apparently the case, and justified by the ideas and language of all nations; though the fact be philosophically otherwise. Surely the truth of God, in his promise to Abram, is little affected by the astronomical arrangement of the heavenly bodies, which latter ages have devised, and whereby the number of those glorious luminaries is determined to a greater degree of accuracy. What the promise means to give the good man full assurance of, is, that his posterity should be both numerous and illustrious beyond all conception. And, if we may be permitted to hazard a conjecture, and to anticipate an observation on this subject; the error of David, many ages afterwards, in insisting on having the people numbered in his reign, which was one of the most prosperous periods of the Israelitish history, consisted in his attempting to determine, what God would have left undetermined. It being an object of much greater importance to a wise and good prince, to see his subjects thriving, numerous, and happy, than to know the exact number over which he reigns; just as it is much more delightful and beneficial to man; to contemplate the beautiful seeming irregularity of the starry heavens, to lose ourselves, as it were, in their glory and immensity, and to enjoy their benign influences, than

to fix with the utmost exactness and precision, their number, motions, and distances. Accordingly, we find, that in the days of Solomon the Son of David, when Jewish splendour and populousness were at their zenith, no attempt was made to discover the number of the people; but in conformity to the obvious intention of God, in the passage now under review, that matter was for ever left in a state of glorious uncertainty.

Abram's doubts are now entirely removed; "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." As God rewards the faithful, not by halves, not sparingly, nor grudgingly; so all true believers, like faithful Abram, honour God by an entire and unlimited confidence; and believe not only *in* hope, but *against* hope. The Patriarch thus indulged and encouraged, presumes still farther on the divine goodness, to entreat some present token of the truth and certainty of the promises made to him. "And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Both from what goes before and what follows, we must conclude, that this was not a request of diffidence, but of desire and love. We neither desire nor exact from our friends formal obligations to show us kindness; this would imply a doubt of their attachment; but we dearly love to bear about us the tokens of their affection. In like manner Abram asked for a sign; not that he suspected any thing, but because he loved much. It was taken as it was meant; and friendship was strengthened by the re-

quest and the grant of it. The covenant which ensued, and the ceremonies by which it was ratified, have already been considered. But some farther circumstances here recorded well deserve our notice. The order for the sacrifice was given early in the morning. The former part of the day was employed in preparing it; and we may suppose all things ready by noon. Abram has done what was incumbent upon him; but the great God is not limited to seasons or forms; Abram must therefore wait and watch—wait till God condescends to appear—watch, that his sacrifice be not plundered nor polluted. At length, about the going down of the sun, the approach of Deity is felt. “And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram: and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.” How insupportable must be the visitations of God’s anger! I tremble while I speak, if the visions of his mercy and love are so awful and tremendous! While Abram was in this ecstasy, the principal events that should affect his family for the space of four hundred years are revealed to him; and the issue is to be, at the end of that period, the quiet and certain possession of the very land which he then inhabited; even from the Nile to the Euphrates. But it is time to conclude.

Let us, in reviewing the subject, raise our thoughts to a new covenant, established on better promises; to a sacrifice whose “blood cleanseth from all sin;” “to a new and living way consecrated into the holiest of all, through the veil,

“ the Redeemer’s flesh.” Let us look to that body which was broken upon the cross, the atonement for transgression; to that “ inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;” to that “ kingdom which cannot be moved,” that government and peace, of “ which there shall be no end;” to that “ great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, which stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands;” to that day, when “ they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”

Is every discovery of God a mixture of light and darkness, “ a furnace that smoketh, a lamp that burneth,” a pillar “ of cloud, a pillar of fire?” Let us rejoice and walk, and live in that light; let us revere, adore, and preserve an humble distance from that darkness. Are the visits of God’s wrath intolerable to the wicked; and the approaches of his gracious presence awful even to the good? Let us, then, think of drawing nigh to him, only through the Son of his love, in whom he is ever well pleased.

Is the covenant, on God’s part, “ ordered in all things and sure?” Are all “ the promises” in Christ “ yea and amen?” Is the “ glory which they propose and ensure, yet to be revealed?” “ Be not faithless, but believing;” “ cast all your

“care upon him, for he careth for you.” “Now
 “we see through a glass darkly; but then face to
 “face: now I know in part; but then I shall know
 “even as also I am known.” “He who cometh
 “will come, and will not tarry.” The grace of our
 Lord Jesus be with your spirits. Amen.

[A] It may perhaps be amusing to the reader, to compare the simplicity of a literal prose translation, with the poetical elegance and spirit of the English Homer. The passage follows:

On either side a sacred herald stands,
 The wine they mix, and on each monarch's hands
 Pour the full urn; then draws the Grecian lord
 His cutlass sheath'd beside his pond'rous sword;
 From the sing'd victims crops the curling hair,
 The heralds part it, and the princes share;
 Then loudly thus, before the attentive bands,
 He calls the Gods, and spreads his lifted hands:
 “O first and greatest Pow'r! whom all obey,
 “Who high on Ida's holy mountain sway,
 “Eternal Jove! and you bright orb that roll
 “From east to west, and view from pole to pole,
 “Thou mother earth! and all the living floods!
 “Infernal furies, and Tartarean Gods,
 “Who rule the dead, and horrid woes prepare
 “For perjurd kings, and all who falsely swear!
 “Hear and be witness. If —————

With that the chief the tender victims slew,
 And in the dust their bleeding bodies threw;
 The vital spirit issued at the wound,
 And left the members quiv'ring on the ground.
 From the same urn they drink the mingled wine,
 And add libations to the Pow'rs divine;
 While thus their pray'rs united mount the sky;
 “Hear, mighty Jove! and hear, ye Gods on high!

- " And may their blood, who first the league confound,
" Shed like this wine, distain the thirsty ground ;
" May all their consorts serve promiscuous lust,
" And all their race be scatter'd as the dust!"

POPE'S Iliad, iii. 376.

LECTURE XIV.

ISAIAH XXVIII. 16.

He that believeth shall not make haste.

THE ways of Providence and the workings of the human mind do not always correspond. In the pursuit of *their* ends, men are at one time careless and indolent, at another, over eager and hasty ; but God is ever advancing towards *his*, with a steady, progressive, majestic pace. When we get sight of a favourite object, we grasp at it through possibility and impossibility ; we hurry on to possession, too little scrupulous about the means : to God all things are possible ; and “ he is the rock, his work is perfect ; for all his ways are judgment : a God of “ truth and without iniquity ; just and right is he.” Men ignorantly and weakly judge of their Maker by themselves, and foolishly attempt to regulate the Divine procedure by their own preconceived opinions of it : “ Behold I thought,” said Naaman the Syrian, “ he will surely come out to me, and “ stand, and call upon the name of the Lord his “ God, and strike his hand over the place, and re- “ cover the leper ;” but God had said, “ Go and “ wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be “ clean.” It is a rare thing to find a faith which

steadily, cheerfully, and constantly walks hand in hand with the purpose and promise of Heaven. We either "stagger at the promise, through unbelief;" or impatiently strive to bring forward the accomplishment by indirect methods.

When we look into history, how unlike do the events appear from the form into which they were previously shaped by the fond expectations of the persons concerned! The Jews, in the person of Messiah, looked for a prince who should revive the faded splendour of David's throne; but the Messiah whom God raised up established a kingdom "of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The disciples are dreaming of sitting at their master's right and left hand, when "the kingdom should be restored to Israel;" he is sending them forth to "suffer shame for his name."

The sentiment of the Prophet, which I have now read as the foundation of another Lecture on the history of Abram, is just and striking. "He that believeth shall not make haste." Faith neither loiters behind, nor strives to outrun, the word of God. "Thus saith the Lord," is its rule and measure; it endures, waits, proceeds, acts, refrains, as "seeing him who is invisible." But in the most composed, the firmest, and most faithful of believers, we find the frailties and infirmities of the man frequently predominant; and we behold a slighter temptation sometimes prevailing, after more severe and difficult trials have been withstood and overcome. Nothing can exceed the solemnity with

which God ratified his covenant with Abram, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis. Under the sanction of the most awful forms and ceremonies, a son is promised, the future father of a numerous offspring; and an inheritance is allotted to that chosen seed, by Him who has all things in Heaven and in earth at his disposal. Abram takes the word of God as a full security: he believes and rejoices. He had now dwelt ten years in Canaan; and notwithstanding his advanced period of life, we find him discovering nothing like eagerness or impatience; he "believed," and therefore did "not make haste." But though he was not the first to devise an undue and intemperate method of arriving at the accomplishment of the promise, we find him ready enough to adopt one of this nature when it was suggested to him.

It was now put beyond a doubt that Abram should become a father, but it has not yet been declared explicitly that Sarai shall be a mother. With the anxiety natural to women in her circumstances, however, we may suppose her to hope till she could hope no longer. At length, her feelings as a wife give way to her concern about her husband's glory and happiness; and she consents to Abram's having children by another, rather than that he should not have children at all. Projects formed and executed in haste, are generally repented of at leisure; and when we fly in the face either of nature or of religion, we shall speedily and infallibly find both the one and the other much too powerful for us,

Sarai's was a lot to be envied by most women ; beautiful and beloved even to old age ; mistress of an ample fortune, and a numerous train of domestics ; the wife of a prince, and, what is much more, of an amiable and excellent man. But the glory and joy of all these flattering circumstances were marred and diminished by one perverse accident, " she "bare Abram no children." Not blindly and capriciously, but in wisdom and in righteousness, the great God apportions to the sons of men good and evil in this life ; that none may be exalted above measure, and that none may sink into dejection and despair. During Abram's sojourn in Egypt, Pharaoh, smitten with Sarai's beauty, had made his court to her, on the presumption of her being a single woman, by the usual modes of attention, and presents numerous and costly, suitable to his rank and the manners of the times ; " sheep, oxen, he-
" asses, men-servants, *maid-servants*, she-asses, and
" camels." Of the female servants probably bestowed upon that occasion, one is now brought particularly into view, and occupies a conspicuous place henceforward in this history. The deception attempted by Abram, in making his wife pass for a sister, is very little to his credit ; and his accepting presents from Pharaoh, circumstanced as he was and knowing what he did, was far from being an honourable proceeding ; indeed no good could be expected to come of it ; and though God did not at the time reproach him for his conduct by a verbal reproof, he is now preparing by his righteous

Providence, to make him feel that he had acted wrong. Thus, the monuments of our faults become the instruments of our punishment. Sarai proposes to her husband to assume this Egyptian hand-maid, Hagar, as a secondary, or inferior wife; in hope of building up a family by her, and thus of making the promise to take effect. Unnatural as this may appear, it is far from being without a parallel. The truth is, it is very natural and very common, to try to get rid of a present pressure, though with the hazard of subjecting ourselves to an heavier burthen. Every thing was wrong here. There was a shameful distrust of God; an attempt to introduce a foreign, and perhaps an idolatrous mother, into the family of Abram; a most unwise and inconsiderate tampering with her husband's affection; a foundation laid of probable, if not of certain, domestic jealousies and quarrels; evil was done in vain expectation that good might come of it. Abram complies with the suggestion of his wife, and Hagar conceives. It requires not the gift of prophecy to foresee the consequence. Hagar becomes vain and insolent, and Sarai is thoroughly mortified. The hand-maid now considers herself as her mistress's equal, if not her superior; she views Abram's vast possessions, and vaster prospects, as entailed on her posterity. Little and wicked minds are soon elevated, and as easily depressed. The whole of Sarai's behaviour is that of a peevish, unreasonable, disappointed woman. The wise scheme was of her own contriving; and now that she feels the effect

of her impetuosity and rashness, she turns the edge of her resentment against her innocent husband. "And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee." How weak, wicked, and absurd is all this! Had the good man formed a deliberate design of injuring and insulting her, she could not have employed harsher language—and yet whatever evil has been committed, was her own devising. But the language of passion is ever contradictory and inconsistent. "My wrong be upon thee." Why should it? "My folly recoils upon myself," would have been the language of truth and justice. She dares not, even in her rage, accuse Abram of incontinency, but reluctantly discerns and acknowledges her own rashness: "I have given my maid into thy bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes." The tide of anger says not it is enough, knows not where to stop: "The Lord judge between me and thee." Who would not conclude, from an appeal so solemn, that she has the better cause? And yet, she is appealing to God in a case where she was clearly, consciously, in the wrong. I like not hasty references to Heaven. A truly serious spirit will reflect twice before it interposes the name of God on any occasion, and will shudder at the thought of employing it upon a false or frivolous one; an angry spirit sticks at nothing. For this reason, I would sooner believe a

plain, unprofessing man, on his simple word, than ten thousand common swearers, under the sanction of as many oaths.

See into what disorder one ill advised measure has thrown a happy, well-regulated family.—Abram's inconsiderate compliance with the precipitate advice of his wife has embroiled him in contention with herself; it constrains him to connive at her cruel treatment of an unhappy woman, who is at least to be pitied as much as blamed; and it renders the prospect of the promised seed a heavy affliction, instead of a blessing. Sarai is betrayed by the eagerness of her spirit, first into an absurdity; then into unkindness and undutifulness towards her lord; then into profanity and impiety towards God; then, by an easy transition, into barbarity towards a wretched slave, who was entirely at her mercy, who had been brought, without any high degree of criminality, into a condition which claims compassion and attention from all; brought into it by herself too; and this to the endangering, for aught she knew, of all the hopes of her husband's family, and the greater interests of the human race. Hagar, hapless wretch! is an object of commiseration throughout: led, perhaps reluctantly, to her master's bed, elevated to a transient gleam of hope, exulting in the prosperity of a moment, hurried instantly back, by all the severities which jealousy can inflict, into the horrors of slavery, and driven from visionary prospects of bliss, into scenes of real distress. Behold her ready to perish, together with the inno-

cent unborn fruit of her womb, in the wilderness, by famine, or the jaws of some ravenous beast; for “when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.” In what deep and accumulated woe, we repeat, may one inconsiderate step involve the children of men? And if good and well-intentioned people suffer thus severely from one act of rashness and imprudence, who but must tremble to think of the fearful consequence of deliberate wickedness? A thousand volumes written against polygamy, could not lead to a clearer, fuller conclusion, against that practice, than the story under review.

Mark now, how seasonably and suitably God interposes to rectify all this disorder. When we have wearied ourselves with our own devices, and snared ourselves in the works of our own hands, Providence takes up the case, subdues it to its own wise and gracious purposes, and turns evil into good. Hagar flies from the face of her unkind mistress, but happily for her, she cannot flee from God. The interest which Abram now has in her, gives an interest in the peculiar care and protection of the Almighty.

This is the first time we read in Scripture of the appearance of an *Angel*; and it was to reprove, exhort, and succour an helpless afflicted woman: and thus is mercy ever more ready to come at the call of misery, than justice to pursue the footsteps of guilt. From the whole tenor of the history, we are led to conclude that this heavenly vision was the uncreated Angel, God in the form, and performing the office of a “ministering spirit:” for this Angel assumes

the name and attributes of Deity, speaks of Hagar's present condition, and future prospects, with the knowledge peculiar to Deity; and describes the extraordinary future greatness of the male child with which she was pregnant, as *his own work*. The event demonstrates *whose* the prediction was: and Hagar evidently considered the person who spake with her, in this light; for she ascribes to him the incommunicable name *Jehovah*, and adores him as the omniscient, omnipresent God. "And the Angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the Angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me." Gen. xvi. 10—13.

A great multitude of striking circumstances press upon our attention in the careful perusal of these words. Does God condescend to exercise all this care and tenderness about a person so obscure, helpless, and unbefriended as Hagar; then who is beneath his notice, or unimportant in his sight? Are the secondary and subordinate designs of his Providence of such extensive and permanent consequence

to the world? Then, of what infinite and eternal weight, is his first great leading object? If an Ishmael be introduced into the world with so much pomp and solemnity, what must the birth of an Isaac be? And what must it be, when God bringeth his own first-begotten upon the scene, whom all the angels are commanded to worship? How astonishingly awful is that fore-knowledge, which discovered before he was born, Ishmael's character; and that power which predetermined and affected the character and state of his posterity to the latest ages, while as yet their progenitor was in his mother's womb? How are all the designs of the Most High, in the course of his adorable Providence, and in the execution of them, rendered subservient to one glorious purpose, which rises superior to, and absorbs all the rest—the plan of salvation by a Redeemer! How wisely are the children both of the bond-woman and of the free, reminded of the lowness and helplessness of their original! “A Syrian ready to perish was my father,” says the one; an Egyptian bond-maid ready to perish was my mother, says the other.

What a happy circumstance it was for Hagar to have lived so long in Abram's house! Liberty in Egypt had not proved a blessing so great, as slavery in Canaan. To be exalted to the dignity of a mother to princes! To be introduced to the knowledge of the living and true God! How different are the appearances of Providence, considered at the moment, and viewed through the medium of reflection

and experience! Under the impulse of sorrow or of joy, we cry out, "All these things are against me," or, "It is good for me to be here;" but when the account comes to be arranged, after the transport is over—we find ourselves necessitated to transfer many articles to the opposite pages, and to state that as favourable which once we called adverse; and that a misfortune which once we accounted a blessing.

The history informs us of Hagar's flight, but leaves us to draw our own conclusions respecting her return. Indeed, we may now suppose all parties to have been brought to cool reflection. The solitude and dangers of the wilderness, and the apparition of the Angel, awful, though in mercy, have, of course, greatly diminished, in Hagar's mind, the rigour of her mistress's treatment, and she is glad to return to her former habitation. The sudden disappearing of her maid; the just apprehension of the evil which might have befallen a desperate woman in her delicate situation; time, serious thought, and remorse for her cruel and unjust behaviour, must surely have humbled the spirit, and mollified the heart of Sarai, and disposed her to receive the returning fugitive, if not with marks of external complaisance, at least with secret and silent satisfaction. And Abram, always wise, and gentle, and good, would now necessarily rejoice in the restored peace of his family; in this fresh demonstration of the divine tenderness towards himself and all who belonged to him; in the farther enlargement and ex-

tent of the blessing promised ; and in the prospect of the final and full accomplishment of all that the Lord had spoken.

According to the word of the Angel, Hagar in due time bears a son to Abram, in the eighty-sixth year of his age, and the eleventh after his departure from Ur of the Chaldees. To preserve for ever the memory of the divine interposition, the name given to the child by the Angel in the wilderness, is put upon him by his pious father, to whom, no doubt, Hagar had carefully related the whole transaction, *Ishmael*, "God shall hear," because God heard, pitied, and relieved her affliction. And such was the origin of the father and founder of the Arabian nation ; a people, who in their character and manners, through every period of their history, evince from what root they sprung, and verify the prediction concerning their Progenitor, "He will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him." And history illustrates the expression of the Angel, "And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." For whereas the slavery and subjection of all other nations make a considerable part of their history, that of the Arahs is entirely composed of a relation of their conquests, or their independence. They are at present, and have continued through the remotest ages, during the various and successive victorious expeditions of Greeks, Romans, and Tartars, a separate, a free, an independent, and an invincible nation ; a mighty band of illustrious robbers,

united among themselves, and formidable to all the world; inhabiting a vast country of one thousand three hundred miles in length, and one thousand two hundred in breadth—one region of which, from the purity and salubrity of its air, and the fertility of its soil, is deservedly denominated *the happy*; it produces the finest fruits, spices, and perfumes in the world, and is remarkable for breeding the most beautiful and useful animals of their kind, horses, camels, and dromedaries.

We now conclude this Lecture, by adding to the reflections already made this farther one, that we are not to judge of the greatness and importance of the designs of Providence, by any worldly marks of distinction and pre-eminence. The posterity of Ishmael was much earlier, and has been much longer established, and existed in a much higher degree of national dignity and consequence, than the posterity of Isaac. But in the line of Isaac, not that of Ishmael, run the promises of life and salvation. To Isaac, and not to his elder brother, pertained “the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises,” and of him “as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.” The things which are highly esteemed among men are often of no price in the sight of Him, who “hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, weak things to confound the mighty, base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea and things which

“are not, to bring to nought things which are, that
“no flesh should glory in his presence.” With
Ishmael *we* have nothing to do, nor with his posterity: they are to us only a wild man and a wild people, inhabiting such a region of the globe. But in Isaac and the fortunes of his family we are deeply interested indeed, as the Apostle Paul writing to the Galatians clearly evinceth: and his words shall be the evangelical illustration of the subject. “Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman: but he who was of the bond woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory,” that is, one thing is expressed, and another hinted at or signified; “for these are the two covenants; the one from the Mount Sina, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar: for this Hagar is Mount Sina in Arabia, and answereth to,” or is in the same rank with, Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children: but Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the

“bond woman and her son ; for the son of the bond
“woman shall not be heir with the son of the free
“woman. So then, brethren, we are not children
“of the bond woman, but of the free.” Gal. iv. 22
—31.

Behold the two prime branches of Abram’s family, from their birth down to this day, separated, supported, distinguished from the rest of mankind, and from each other, a standing proof of the power and Providence of God, and a demonstration of the authenticity of that Revelation which we acknowledge as divine, and on which we build all our faith and hope. “Behold, the counsel of the Lord shall
“stand for ever, and the purpose of his heart to a
“thousand generations.” God grant us wisdom to understand and do his will, to the glory of his name, and our own eternal salvation. Amen.

LECTURE XV.

HEBREWS XIII. 2.

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

WHEN men are disappointed in their expectations, it is natural for them to become negligent about the performance of their duties. Irritated or grieved at one thing, they grow careless about every thing; and because another has failed in affection or respect to us, we suffer ourselves to behave unkindly and disrespectfully to others. The effect which mortification, disappointment, or injuries, have upon truly good minds, is, however, the reverse of this; the vexation or distress which they themselves have endured, is the strongest of incentives to prevent, as far as they are able, similar occasion of affliction to their brethren of mankind.

Men stand continually in need of each other, and therefore every man is bound to give his countenance, to show kindness, and to grant support, to every man. We cannot move a single step through the world, without being brought into connexion with strangers, and of course, without having opportunities afforded us of bestowing or of receiving some instance of hospitality. To be careless or unkind

in this respect, then, is to be at once unwise, inhuman, and unjust. Christianity has taken into its service every valuable and worthy principle of our nature, and calls the whole catalogue of human virtues its own. As we are continually reminded, in the course of Providence, of our being pilgrims and strangers upon earth, so we are strictly and repeatedly enjoined by the laws of the Gospel, to be attentive and kind to strangers. "Be given to hospitality," says Paul. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging," says Peter; and in the words I have read, the Apostle recommends the same duty of humanity, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers," which he enforces by a motive which every heart must feel, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." It is of this motive, and of the history to which it refers, that we are now to discourse.

After a delay of ten years, the promise of a son is made good to Abram. But as he consulted not God in the means of obtaining that blessing, so God consults not his views and expectations in the character and destination of the son given to him. For it is one thing to be blessed and to prosper in the gifts of Providence, and another, to be blessed in the course of the promise, and according to the tenor of the covenant. The seed which the Most High swore that he would raise up, was to prove an universal benefit to mankind; but the son whom Hagar bare was to be "a wild man; whose hand should be against every man, and every man's hand

“ against him :” Abram therefore is apparently as far as ever from his favourite object ; and as a farther trial of his faith, perhaps to punish him for deviating from the strict line of his duty, though with an honest intention, thirteen years more are permitted to elapse, and yet no symptom of the expected mercy appears.

At that period, while the improbability, in the course of nature, was daily increasing, Abram is again visited with the visions of the Almighty. Our attendance upon God must be constant and assiduous, and it is equally our interest and our duty to wait upon him ; but if he makes himself known to us at all, at whatsoever season, in whatever manner, it is infinite grace and condescension. Jehovah’s appointed time is now at length come to enter on the performance of his own work in his own way. The very first word that proceeds from his lips removes every difficulty, though natural obstacles might seem increased : “ I am the Almighty God,” Gen. xvii. 1. or, *God all-sufficient* ; fear therefore no failure of the covenant on my part, for what truth hath spoken, that shall Omnipotence bring to pass : and see that there be no unfaithfulness on thine, “ walk “ before me, and be thou perfect.” The former declarations concerning a numerous offspring are renewed, and an alteration is made in the Patriarch’s name, importing his relation to a multitude of princes and nations who shall spring from him. To the eye of nature the title is premature ; but faith considers that as done, which is promised. Observe

Abraham's posture, while God talks with him ; " he fell on his face." The presence of the Almighty is the loudest call to humility, and the more any one knows of God, the more he must fear before him. Behold Abraham fallen to the ground, and angels covering their faces with their wings, and tremble thou, O man, before him !

But the trial of Abraham's faith and obedience is not yet over. God has appeared, not to fulfil the promises under the first covenant, but to enter into a second : and, instead of receiving the long expected son, he is commanded to perform an unpleasant and painful operation upon his own body, and upon all the males of his family. To qualify, however, the bitterness of this prescription, the promise becomes more express, and brings the darling object closer to the eye ; it is now declared, that Sarai, whose name too was changed, as a witness and token of the event, should bear a son, and that next year should at length crown all his wishes, and evince the truth and faithfulness of God. Abraham acquiesces with gratitude and joy. He had believed and trusted God, when the event was more obscure and remote, and now that it is more distinctly seen, and brought to the very eye of accomplishment, his heart exults with purer and more sensible delight. This the Scripture expresses, by saying, He fell on his face and *laughed* ; a circumstance which Providence instantly lays hold of, and perpetuates to every future generation the memory of Abraham's faith on this occasion—the son that should be born,

shall by his name, *Isaac, he shall laugh*, express that emotion, which his pious, believing father felt, when the will of God was revealed to him. Abraham laughed in faith, and is rewarded every time he beholds his son, or hears his name pronounced, by the approbation of God and his own conscience : Sarah afterwards laughed in incredulity, and was as often reproved for her unbelief.

We hear not Abraham inquiring into the reasons or meaning of God's covenant of *circumcision* ; and we will imitate his pious reserve and submission. It was sufficient to him, and be it so to us, that thus God would have it to be. That the great Jehovah should have distinguished the descendants of that family from all the families of the earth by this token, and continue to the present hour thus to distinguish them, after almost every other badge of difference is obliterated and lost ; that the posterity of Abraham should persevere in this practice through a period so extended, and that no other nation should ever have adopted it as an established rite of their religion, is one of those apparently unimportant circumstances which are ready to escape the hasty eye, but which, in connexion with other proofs, establish the truth and certainty of the Scripture Revelation, and the constant interposition of divine Providence in the affairs of men, beyond the power of contradiction. Behold then the rite of circumcision is performed ; and Abraham sits down in the patient expectation of the appointed hour of merciful visitation.

One day, while he was enjoying the coolness of

the shade at his tent door, in the heat of day, three men, under the appearance of travellers, presented themselves to his view. These were three angels, say some of the Jewish Rabbins, and without hesitation, they furnish us with their names too, *Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael*. A few of the Christian Fathers, on the other hand, contend, that here was a visible representation of the Most Holy Trinity, exhibited to Abraham as three, addressed and acknowledged by him as one. That something more than created excellence was there, cannot be doubted, after a careful perusal of what Moses has related upon this occasion. But whether the mystery of the Trinity was thus, and then, revealed to the church in the covenant head of it, we presume not to affirm. It is apparent that the Patriarch did not, during the former part of the interview, comprehend the nature and quality of his guests, as he neither performs the worship due to the Most Holy God, nor preserves that awful distance, which even the presence of an angel must inspire; and the Apostle, alluding to him in the text, says, “he entertained angels *unawares*,” that is, not knowing he did so. —

The scene that follows is a beautiful picture of ancient manners, and wonderfully coincides with the customs of the other nations of remote antiquity, as transmitted to us by their historians and poets, particularly Homer, that careful observer, and masterly painter of nature and human life.

Abraham immediately starts from his seat with

all the agility of youth, at the sight of the strangers; and with all that glow of affection which is natural to a good man, who had himself known the heart of a stranger, he tenders them every accommodation and refreshment which his simple habitation could afford. Sweetness of temper, easiness of behaviour, and kindness of disposition, are peculiarly engaging in old people, because these qualities do not so frequently adorn life's decline. The invitation, hospitably given, is cheerfully accepted.

True kindness, which is true politeness, attends to the *little* wishes and wants of those whom we entertain. *Water* to wash the feet of the weary traveller is a refreshment, though not so necessary as a morsel of *bread* to comfort his heart, yet, in a sultry climate especially, not less grateful. We remember slight attentions after we have forgotten great benefits. The proud man makes a feast to gratify himself; the hospitable man, to rivet the bonds of friendship, or cherish the soul of the stranger. What a delightful simplicity runs through the whole story! The fare, "cakes of fine meal, baked upon the hearth" by the hands of Sarah herself; a "calf from the herd," of Abraham's own choosing; butter and milk, the produce of their own pasture; their canopy, the spreading branches of an old tree; their attendants, the man who had in former days put kings and their armies to flight; the subject of their conversation, Abraham's family affairs. Contrast with this the madness of a modern fashionable entertainment; the profusion of

far-fetched luxury, the emulation of wealth and pride, the ingenuity employed in contriving and administering incentives to excess, the gibberish of compliment, the restraints of ceremony, the tinsel of false wit, the noise of mirth without joy, to the expulsion of truth and nature: a costly and painful collection, where nothing is wanting, but the very things which constitute a feast, plenty of wholesome fare, unaffected friendship, moderation, good humour, and good sense.

When we are doing our duty, we are in the way of procuring for ourselves gratification; and if there be a virtue which is its own reward, hospitality is that virtue. Abraham now enjoys it to the full. But little does he think what a repast his divine guest is providing for him in return. Sarah, according to the manners of the times, had remained invisible, confining herself to her own separate tent. The Angel now enquires concerning her, on purpose to introduce a conversation respecting the object of this visit; and assuming his proper character of Jehovah, subjoins a direct promise, that within the course of a year from that day, Abraham should have a son by her. Sarah, whom curiosity had drawn towards the door of the tent to listen, overhears this conversation, and not knowing the promise or the power of God, treats it as a thing impossible, and laughs, not in joy, but in derision. She is observed, detected, and reproved of Him who is at once faithful, good, and merciful; holy, just, and severe. But why is Abraham called to answer for

the infirmities of his wife? Was it to render the reproof more pointed to Sarah? As, indeed, what can be so galling to an ingenuous mind, as to hear an innocent person called in question for our fault? The criminal now stands discovered; she is dragged from her lurking place, and stands abashed and confounded, to make her defence. Ah, how dangerous it is, to have deviated once from the path of rectitude! How one false step leads to another, and another, and another, till conviction and shame close the scene! The first wrong step here was the indulgence of an idle curiosity, a dangerous, if not a sinful principle. People who listen, generally hope or fear to hear something about themselves, and it seldom happens that they are entirely gratified with what they hear. The next error was her secret disbelief of a promise so frequently and so solemnly repeated: that is followed by the weakness of thinking to escape the notice of one who beheld her though unseen, and could read her heart, though her person was not in view; and finally, deliberate falsehood attempts to conceal her preceding faults.

God neither overlooks nor forgets the errors of those towards whom he has thoughts of love; and happily the purposes of his grace are not to be defeated by the forwardness and folly of men. Sarah, in spite of her incredulity, shall become the joyful mother of a son, and that son shall be the source of blessings innumerable, unspeakable, to mankind. God in his holiness hath sworn it, and "is any

“ thing too hard for the Lord ?” The business of this important visit being settled, the strangers rise to depart, and look as if they would go towards Sodom ; and Abraham, not satisfied with having performed one instance of hospitality, follows it up to the last with kindness and attention, “ he went “ with them to bring them on the way.” Two of the three, it would seem, now disappeared, and Abraham is left alone with the third, and from the conversation that ensues, we have no room left to doubt that he was the Son of God, come down to execute the vengeance of Heaven upon the sinful cities of the plain. “ And the Lord said, Shall I “ hide from Abraham that thing which I do ; seeing “ that Abraham shall surely become a great and “ mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth “ shall be blessed in him ? For I know him, that “ he will command his children and his household “ after him, and they shall keep the way of the “ Lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord “ may bring upon Abraham that which he hath “ spoken of him. And the Lord said, Because the “ cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because “ their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, “ and see whether they have done altogether accord- “ ing to the cry of it, which is come unto me ; and “ if not, I will know. And the men turned their “ faces from thence, and toward Sodom : but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.” Gen. xviii. 17 —22. The same person descends to bless Abraham, and to destroy Sodom : thus the same Gospel is

“ a savour of life unto life, and of death unto death,
“ in them that believe, and in them that perish ;”
and thus shall the same divine person be revealed
in the end of the world, “ in flaming fire, taking
“ vengeance on them that know not God, and that
“ obey not the Gospel,” and, to be glorified in his
saints, and admired “ in all them that believe.”
2 Thess. i. 8, 10.

Abraham having obtained mercy himself, becomes an intercessor for his sinful neighbours. The judgments of God are very awful to a serious mind; fools only make a mock at sin, and at its fearful consequences. But the whole scene is too interesting and instructive, to be brought forward in the close of a Lecture, especially as it is necessary before dismissing you, to make some reflections of a practical tendency, from what has been spoken.

You see, my friends, of what moment the salvation of a lost world is in the sight of God. At how many times, in how many different manners, did God speak of this subject unto the fathers? How many embassies of angels; how many appearances of the Mighty Angel of the covenant himself? As if the great God had been carrying on no design from the beginning but one, a design of love to guilty fallen men: that one, which of all others, guilty fallen men treat with the greatest slight and contempt. What! shall not that purpose and plan which occupied the Eternal Mind from everlasting; to mature and execute which the world was created; which has been declared to man by so many signs in

Heaven above, and on earth beneath, by the tongues of ~~so~~ many prophets, by so many oracles; to announce which angels and archangels have descended from their thrones; and to accomplish which, God was made manifest in the flesh, tabernacled among men, and proclaimed the great salvation—shall it be announced, unfolded, executed in vain? And will thoughtless, inconsiderate creatures, continue to treat it as a thing of nought? Ah, when shall we cordially enter into the views of God our Maker and Redeemer, and earnestly pursue the same object with him—the salvation of ourselves and others?

God is not sensibly present with us, as he was with Abraham, but he is as really so, as if the eye beheld him, and as if we conversed with him face to face. O man, God is in thy heart and conscience; God is in this place; in this book: and he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The visions of the Almighty to Abraham are visits of mercy to you. How easily could he draw aside the veil which conceals him from our eyes, and where we see nothing but empty space, discover to us a marshalled host of “chariots and horsemen of fire!” But he is to be now discerned only by the eye of faith, and we must be satisfied to “see in a glass darkly.” The awful period approaches when the veil shall drop, and we ourselves, disembodied spirits, shall see and feel, and converse with the Father of spirits. Let “thou God seest me,” O man! be the leading, commanding idea of thy life, in the city and in the field, in society and in soli-

tude, by night and by day, and when you come to die, you will find you have not far to go; to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord." Is it so pleasant and improving to contemplate the detached fragments of the plan of Providence and Redemption, which is all we can attain in this state? What will it be in yonder world of bliss, to be endowed with a capacity of comprehending the whole vast design, and to have the harmony, connexion, and dependance of the several parts, revealed to us by Him who is both the author and finisher of it. Eagerly hungering after the fruit of this tree of life, "which grows in the midst of the Paradise of God," this tree of knowledge of good but not of evil; let us be humbly and modestly, but carefully and constantly, searching the Scriptures, in which alone the way of eternal life is declared, and that life is in the Son of God. And may God give us understanding in all things, and to his name be praise. Amen.

LECTURE XVI.

JAMES II. 23.

And the Scripture ~~was~~ fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it ~~was~~ imputed unto him for righteousness: and he ~~was~~ called the friend of God.

OF all the temporal blessings which God in his exuberant goodness hath bestowed upon the sons of men, one of the greatest, if not the chief, is a sincere and virtuous friend. Into the composition of this character enter all the amiable and excellent qualities which our nature possesses; and in a commerce of virtuous friendship, we find the exertion of the noblest principles, and a display of the worthiest actions. The person who is approved and esteemed of wise and good men, must himself be wise and good. To what a height of dignity then is the Patriarch Abraham raised? Venerable in possessing the esteem of men; infinitely more venerable, as distinguished by the approbation and friendship of God. Volumes written in his praise, and containing a particular enumeration of his virtues, could not say more than the few words of the Apostle which have now been read. All that is necessary, in order to explain them, is to have recourse to his history, to mark his character, to observe his conduct; and on the other hand, to trace

the dispensations of the Divine Providence towards him, and to attend to the manner in which it pleased God to treat him, in order to learn how this sacred friendship was constituted, and in what it consisted. And, on the part of Abraham, we shall find cheerful and prompt obedience, unbounded trust and confidence, profound reverence, and fervent love; on the part of God, the most winning condescension, the tenderest affection, the most unshaken constancy. One essential quality of true friendship entered particularly into this, namely, communication of purpose and design. Abraham indeed could have no view or intention, but what lay open to the eye of God, as soon as it was formed within his own breast; but the designs of the Most High could be known to him only as they were revealed.

We are presented with a very remarkable instance of such gracious communication, in the close of that interview, the commencement of which has already passed under review. God having confirmed the faith of Abraham, and reproved the infidelity of Sarah respecting the promised seed, unfolds a farther design he had in this solemn visit to our world. He has come to execute judgment as well as to show mercy; "for our God is a consuming fire." But the hands of Omnipotence are as it were bound up, till Abraham the friend of God is made acquainted with what is meditating. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" As afterwards he said to Lot, when he wished to hasten his flight from

the midst of destruction, "Escape thither ; for I cannot do any thing until thou be come thither."

The character given of Abraham well deserves the attention of every father, of every master. "For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." The secret divulged under this sacred seal is God's determination speedily and signally to destroy Sodom, and the neighbouring cities, whose profligacy was arrived to such enormity, as suffered not justice to rest. Whatever thoughtless men may think of sin, it can be no light thing which reaches the eternal throne, calls forth the terrors of Almighty power, and brings down the Most High from Heaven to earth. Abraham, justly alarmed at this intimation, with the sympathy and tenderness natural to a good mind, takes upon him to intercede in behalf of his unhappy neighbours, now placed on the very brink of ruin. A truly gracious spirit is never harsh and unmerciful. The vilest criminal, when delivered up to the punishment which he justly merits, excites compassion in the feeling and humane. The persons who themselves most need forgiveness are generally the most unrelenting, and make the lightest of the judgments of God upon others.

Lot, allured by the beauty and fertility of the plain of Sodom, had chosen to fix his residence there, when he parted from his uncle, and is now ready to pay dearly for the imprudence of that choice.

When we view an object but in one light, that which strikes us first, and flatters us most, and when we make choice of it for a few more obvious and attractive qualities, we are laying up for ourselves sorrow and remorse in the day when experience has opened our eyes to the discovery of circumstances, unheeded or overlooked before. In Abraham's place an ordinary mind would have enjoyed at least a temporary triumph, when Sodom was threatened: the triumph of sagacity and ease, over rashness, imprudence, and danger. But far different concerns occupied Abraham's breast: concern about the interests of God's glory, and about precious souls ready to perish. The whole intercessory scene is affecting in a very high degree, and needs no commentary to illustrate its force and beauty. I shall simply read it. "And Abraham drew near, and said, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy, and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and

“ashes. Peradventure there shall lack five of the
“fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for
“lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and
“five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto
“him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall
“be forty found there. And he said, I will not do
“it for forty’s sake. And he said unto him, Oh,
“let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Per-
“adventure there shall thirty be found there. And
“he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.
“And he said, Behold, now, I have taken upon
“me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there
“shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will
“not destroy it for twenty’s sake. And he said,
“Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak
“yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found
“there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten’s
“sake.” Gen. xviii, 23—32.

It was thus that God, and Abraham the friend of God, lived and conversed together; it was thus, this sacred friendship was mutually expressed. The fearful catastrophe that presently ensued falls not within the design of the present Lecture, which is to trace the history and character of the Patriarch Abraham. The next time he is brought into our view, we behold him at an awful distance contemplating that destruction which he could not by entreaty and intercession avert. Dreadful change! That beautiful plain, which had allured the eyes of Lot, in one eventful day converted into a vast smoking furnace! Cities and their inhabitants swallowed

up in a deluge of fire! "The Lord reigneth, let the
"people tremble."

Abraham had lived sixteen years in the plain of Mamre; but now, whether by the particular direction of Heaven, or prompted by a natural desire to withdraw from a neighbourhood rendered unwholesome and unpleasant by the change which had passed upon it, and which incessantly presented such a tremendous monument of divine wrath to his eyes, he removes to the south west corner of Canaan, between Cadesh and Shur, near the wilderness, and sojourned in the kingdom of Gerar, the country of the Philistines, and which afterwards was by Lot assigned to the tribe of Judah. And here again, Abraham, through fear and suspicion, is induced to employ the same deceit which he had practised in Egypt, respecting his relation to Sarah, and thereby runs into the very danger which he meant to avoid. His conduct on this account is undoubtedly very reprehensible. He was to blame for judging so dishonourably of mankind, as to think ill of a people whom he knew not. "Surely the fear of God is not in this place: they will slay me for my wife's sake." Surely the fear of God was not before his own eyes, when he had recourse to a subterfuge so mean, to preserve the honour of his wife, and his own life. He was to blame for employing artifice a second time after God had extricated him so mercifully from his first error. Had not God said, "I am thy shield?" and yet he fears where no fear was. Had not God said, "Walk

"before me, and be thou perfect?" And yet he yields to a slight temptation. The very apology which he makes for his conduct, when the truth was brought to light, discovers a mind not perfectly satisfied with itself. "And yet indeed she is my sister: she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife." O, how lovely, how majestic is simple truth! It seeks no retirement, stands in need of no defence, is ever consistent with itself, ever inspires with courage him who practises it. Falsehood strips the mind of its conscious dignity, keeps a man perpetually in fear, puts invention continually on the rack to prevent the means of detection. But the weakness of man shall not make the purpose of God of none effect. Sarah, now pregnant of the promised seed, is miraculously protected of Heaven, and the truth of God, in Abimelech's dream, exposes Abraham's waking deception. "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee." --

Abimelech, by the various uncommon circumstances which had affected his family and kingdom, from the time that Abraham had come into it, being fully persuaded that he was a favourite of Heaven, endeavours by presents and courtesy to attach him closely to himself, and prevails with him to accept of a habitation in his country. There, it was so determined of Providence, Sarah was delivered of the long expected son of promise. Time creeps or flies to us, according to our hopes or our fears, our sorrows or our joys; but with God, there is no

quickness or slowness of progression, no distance of place or time. Our eagerness and impatience cannot accelerate, our reluctance or aversion ~~cannot~~ retard his purpose a single instant of time. The joy of such an event is rather to be imagined than described. The birth of a child is always matter of unutterable satisfaction to the mother at least; what then must have been the solid, the heartfelt joy of Abraham and Sarah, on the birth of a son, the heir of great possessions, the father and founder of a mighty nation, the progenitor, according to the flesh, of the Saviour of the world; given by promise, and raised up by a miracle!

Sarah herself, it would appear, performed the maternal office of suckling this precious child; neither her high rank, nor abundant affluence, nor advanced period of life, are pleaded to exempt her from this task of nature. According to the custom of the times, Abraham made a great entertainment on the day that Isaac was weaned, when probably he was solemnly recognized as Abraham's heir, and by some public act invested with his rights as such. This would naturally excite the envy and displeasure of Ishmael, and it produced that insolent or contemptuous behaviour, which our translation renders by the word "mocking," and by which Sarah was so much incensed, that she insisted on the immediate banishment of Hagar and her son. No created joy is either pure and unmixed, or for long continuance. Sarah's comfort is marred by the brutality and insolence of Ishmael to her son, and not improbably

by the fear she entertained of one so much advanced in age, stature, and strength, above Isaac, and of such a wild and untoward disposition. Abraham's peace is destroyed, and his life embittered by the necessity he is under of driving from his house his own child, and the unhappy mother. Whether the good man were criminal or not, in the assumption of Hagar as his concubine, evident it is that first and last he smarted severely for it. Isaac too, the covenant head and representative of the church, begins at an early period of life, indeed, to suffer persecution from the jealousy and malignity of the serpent's issue. Thus, in every state and condition of human life, God sets one thing against another, that we may still and ever be brought to the recollection, that "this is not our rest." We are more surprised at the slender provision with which Hagar and Ishmael are dismissed, than at the dismissal itself. That the Patriarch, for the sake of peace at home, should consent to part with the bond-woman and her son, is very conceivable; but that they should be turned adrift into the wide world, without protection, without attendant, without provision, except so much bread and water as the wretched mother could carry upon her own shoulders; these are circumstances, which, on the usual principles of human conduct, appear altogether strange and unaccountable. But in God, the fatherless and the friendless ever find mercy. Lost in the wilderness, outcast from society, disowned and rejected, ready to perish with hunger and thirst, they meet with at-

tention from Him who feeds the ravens, and without whom a sparrow falleth not to the ground.

We may well suppose that Ishmael's expulsion from his father's house and fortunes, and the way of life into which it forced him, would greatly increase his natural ferocity of temper, and contribute to form and fix that character, which was given of him by the Angel before he was born: "he shall be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethern." God brings his predictions to pass, not always, nor generally, by miraculous interposition, but by the operation and concurrence of natural causes. "He became an archer," lived by declaring war on the beasts of the field, and gradually brought himself to bear, and even to prefer that way of living, which had at first been obtruded upon him by the strong hand of necessity. So happily is our nature framed, that use at length reconciles the mind to what was in prospect insupportable, and, at first, galling and distressful. Hagar, in resentment probably of the treatment she had met with, in order to widen the breach, and to bar the way to reconciliation, forms a marriage for her son with a woman of her own country: from which we may conclude that they went back headlong into idolatry.

The vexation arising from this domestic dissension has scarcely subsided, when Abraham finds himself embroiled with his host and protector the King of Gerar. The servants of Abimelech take violent

possession of a well of water which the servants of Abraham had digged, and the quarrel is taken up by the principals themselves. Such is human nature: such is human life. From the beginning to this day, miserable mortals have been contending and striving, and shedding each other's blood about a well of water, or some such possession becoming a ground of dissension. The whole world is a possession too small for ambition and avarice, and selfishness considers that as taken from us which another enjoys. Happily, moderation and good sense prevented this offence from coming to an open rupture. When men are disposed to peace, punctilio is easily overlooked; but where there is a disposition to quarrel, it is easy to magnify the most petty neglect into an affront, and to make an unmeaning look the occasion of a breach. The convention between Abraham and Abimelech is ratified in the most solemn manner, by the making, *that is*, the *cutting or dividing* of a covenant, according to the form observed on a much more important occasion, and which has been described in a former Lecture: namely, The ratification of the covenant between God and Abraham. But why should covenants, promises, oaths, be necessary in the commerce of human life? Alas! because men are false, treacherous, and perfidious. The awful manners and customs of times that are past, only serve to convince us, that in every age the corruption of men has been so great upon the earth, that ordinary obligations will not bind; that without the sanctions

of religion, the sense of honour, regard to the rights of mankind, and the supposed rectitude of human nature, are feeble and inefficacious. No other argument is necessary to prove that our nature is depraved, and that religion is necessary to man, than the necessity to which men have been reduced, in every age and nation, to secure and preserve the interests of truth and justice, by explicit compacts, and by solemn appeals to the Deity : by making " an oath for confirmation an end of all strife." Abraham dreads Abimelech, as not having the fear of God before his eyes. Abimelech stands in awe of Abraham as under the special protection of Heaven : they agree in one thing, in revering the sanctity of a solemn oath ; which being interposed, they both sit down secure and happy ; Abimelech rests satisfied that Abraham will do nothing to disturb his family or government, or injure his person ; Abraham is confident, that Abimelech will not encroach on the rights of private property, nor invade those of conscience.

This transaction seems to have brought our Patriarch to a resting place. He is not himself to be a potentate in the earth, but a great prince courts his alliance, and forms a league with him. The possession of Canaan is postponed, but Isaac is born. The son of the bond-woman is banished, but the son of the free-woman lives in his house, grows, and prospers, and increases in stature, and in favour with God and man. We see the good man now in the serenity of a vigorous, placid old

age, enjoying all that this world can bestow on a virtuous mind, united to a wholesome constitution; unimpaired by intemperance or disease, failing only by the gradual imperceptible decays of nature; a man capable of enjoying life to the last. I behold the venerable sage planting his oaks in Beersheba, solacing himself with the thought, that though his head was soon to be laid low, his Isaac would in due time repose under their shade. How contemptible is the spirit which considers self only in all that it does! How that man is to be honoured who lives to the end of life, nay strives to prolong existence, and succeeds in the attempt, by engaging in pursuits through which posterity is to be benefited! We will now leave him in this happy tranquillity of life; and may his trees quickly rise to shelter his aged head from the sultry heat of the noon-tide sun; and be his Isaac a comfort greater than ever parent knew; and let the tide of benevolence from his good and honest heart, roll back to its source, increased with overflowing fulness from the ocean of everlasting love. But the grove which he planted was not merely an amusement for old age, or an embellishment of his habitation; it was dedicated to God, and destined as a seat of devotion: there “he called “on the name of the Lord.”

We bid him adieu, then, at this pleasant resting place of life, rejoicing in the past, and calmly waiting the hour of dismissal from all his trials and sorrows. But I dread this treacherous tranquillity. Bodes it not an approaching storm? The event will

show. We shall not anticipate, but here conclude this Lecture, with inviting you to a participation in that divine friendship which Abraham enjoyed, and from which none is excluded; for "the secret of the Lord is with all them that fear him, and he sheweth to them his holy covenant." What is the birth of an Isaac compared to the manifestation of God in the flesh! "To us a son is born, to us a Saviour is given," and in "him all the families of the earth are blessed." Let the history of Abraham teach us how vain it is to expect unmixed happiness in a world of vanity; and to dread the approach of calamity when we possess uncommon ease. Let us adore and admire the wonder-working hand of God, which unseen directs, controls, subdues all creatures and all events to its own purposes. Let us trust in the Lord and do good, and love, and speak, and practise truth. When we see the father of the faithful failing and faltering, let none be high minded, but fear, and "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Did Providence take Ishmael the outcast, the wild man, under its protection? Let poor and virtuous parents take encouragement to cast the care of their helpless offspring on the Father of the fatherless and the Judge of the widow. Did one hasty ill-advised step involve the Patriarch in such acute and lasting distress? Ponder, then, O man, the paths of thy feet, and beware of doing evil, in expectation that good may come of it.

By casting your eyes upon the sacred page, you

will see what is to form the subject of the next discourse. It is a topic well known, and which has been frequently treated, but it is one of those that will ever please and ever instruct. May God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

LECTURE XVII.*

HEBREWS XI. 17—19.

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead: from whence also he received him in a figure.

THE parts of history which please and instruct us most, are those which exhibit to us illustrious persons in trying situations, holding fast their integrity, conducting themselves with wisdom, and overcoming great difficulty by patience, and fortitude, and trust in God. The passages of our own lives which we recollect with the greatest satisfaction, and which we find ourselves most disposed to relate to others, are those which, while they passed, were involved in the greatest danger and distress. The memory of past joys is generally insipid and disgusting, but the recollection of the perils which we have escaped, the obstacles which we have surmounted, the miseries which we have endured and overcome, is in truth the chief ingredient in the happiness of our more tranquil days, and the consolation which a life of fatigue, exertion, and calamity, provides for the inactivity, feebleness, and

retirement of old age. No man thinks of calling to his own remembrance, or of describing to another, the festivity of an entertainment, a month after it is over : but the horrors of a battle or a shipwreck, are thought and talked of with delight, as long as we are capable of thinking or speaking. What a feast was Abraham preparing for his remaining years, by the sacrifice he tendered upon Mount Moriah ! What subject of useful meditation, what an example of praise-worthy conduct, has he furnished to mankind, to the end of the world ! This is one of the peculiarly happy portions of history, which at once awaken and interest our feelings ; which fire the imagination ; seize, restrain, exercise, improve the understanding, and powerfully tend to affect and influence the conduct. As a scene in private life, we contemplate it again and again, with new and increasing admiration and delight ; as entering into, and connected with the great, the divine plan of Providence and Redemption, we regard it with religious veneration.

Most men, during the bustling period of human life, amuse themselves with prospects of retreat and tranquillity in its close. And so most probably did Abraham. He had arrived, through much tribulation, at that period when nature wishes for and expects to find repose. All that a wise and good man could reasonably propose to himself, he had, through the blessing of Heaven, happily attained. Religion crowned his multiplied temporal comforts, and opened the celestial paradise to his view. Isaac,

the joy of his joy, the essence of all his other felicities, is born, has grown up, is become amiable, and wise, and good. His eyes have seen the salvation of God, and he is ready to depart in peace, whenever the summons comes. But ah, how vain to think of rest till the scene be closed indeed, and death hath sealed the weary eyes for ever! All the trials which Abraham had hitherto endured are merely superficial wounds, compared to the keen stroke of that two-edged sword, which now pierced him, even "to the dividing asunder of soul and "spirit, and of the joints and marrow." To suffer banishment from his country and friends at the age of seventy-five years; to be driven by famine from the land of promise into a distant country; to have the companion of his youth, and the affectionate partner of all his fortunes, repeatedly forced from him; to have his domestic quiet disturbed, and his life embittered by female jealousy and resentment; to be reduced to the necessity of expelling his elder son from his house, with the slender provision of a little bread and water: These, taken either separately or in connexion, and compared with the usual afflictions to which man is exposed, present us, it must be allowed, with a lot of great severity and hardship, but they are lost in the severity of the greater woe yet behind. For "it came to pass after "these things," in addition to all foregoing evils, and apparently to the defeating of the great designs planned by God himself, and in part executed,

"that God tried Abraham" in this manner: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Gen. xxii. 2.

We mean not to go into the unnecessary criticism which has been employed, with perhaps a good intention, to vindicate the divine conduct on this occasion. Surely the infinitely wise God is equal to his own defence. He has transmitted to us this part of his procedure without rendering a reason, without making an apology: and it is presumption, not piety, which shows on every occasion an eagerness to reason in his behalf. Is it not sufficient at present to say, that men are very incompetent judges of the divine conduct; that a view of the detached parts cannot enable us to form a just and adequate conception of the whole; and that without knowing the ultimate end and design, we must of necessity have a very imperfect idea of the means and instruments which may be employed?

It were easy to declaim on the horrid idea of demanding a human sacrifice, and of employing the hand of a father in a service so unnatural; on the mischief which might arise from an example so dreadful; on the manifest contradiction between this mandate and other laws, both general and special: and perhaps it were as easy to refute all such declamation, and to prove it nugatory and absurd. But let any man, learned or unlearned, read the history

throughout, and if he is not both pleased and instructed, he must be either stupid or fastidious in a very high degree.

In what manner the command of Heaven was communicated to Abraham, we are not informed. It was unquestionably conveyed with so much clearness and certainty, as left him no possibility of doubting from whom it came. And it again leads us to reflect on the irresistible power which God possesses, and exercises, over our bodies and our minds, whereby he can communicate himself to us in a thousand ways, of which we are able to form no conception, and against which we should in vain attempt to arm ourselves. It appears to have been in the night season: probably when, as on a former occasion, God had "caused a deep sleep, and a horror of great darkness to fall upon him."

What a stroke to the fond paternal heart! Every word in the oracle seems calculated to awaken some painful feeling, and to increase the difficulty of compliance. A person of humanity like Abraham might naturally be supposed to revolt from the idea of a human sacrifice, had the meanest slave of his household been demanded, and had the choice of a victim been left to himself. What then must have been the emotions of his soul, from the moment its darling object was mentioned by the voice of God, till the mandate was completed. "Take now thy son,"—this must have at once produced eagerness of attention in a mind ever awake and alive to the

welfare and prosperity of Isaac. The tender manner in which God is pleased to describe that favourite child would undoubtedly excite the most pleasing hope of some new mark of the divine regard to him; "take now thy son, thy only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest," and invest him with all the honours of the promise, put him in possession of his destined inheritance? Ah no!—Turn him out a wanderer after his brother Ishmael, with a loaf of bread, and a bottle of water, for his portion? That had been severe. But more dreadful still—"and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Abraham hesitates not, argues not. He who before staggered not at the promise, staggers not now at the precept, through unbelief. As a proof of his being in earnest, he rises immediately, while it was yet early; he makes all needful preparation for this heavy journey, and costly sacrifice, with the utmost serenity and cheerfulness; he communicates to no one the order given him, lest the weakness of others might have shaken his own firmness, or interrupted his progress. Having saddled his ass, for it was in this simple style that the great men of the East in these better days of the world used to travel; having summoned two of his young men to attend and assist in the preparation, having called Isaac, and cleft the wood for the burnt offering, they proceed together from Beersheba to the land of Moriah.

Josephus represents Isaac at this time as in his

twenty-fifth year, and describes him, with much appearance of truth, as a young man of singular accomplishments, both of body and of mind. The trial was, without doubt, greatly increased to Abraham by the delay, and the distance of the place of sacrifice. Had the oracle demanded an instant offering, the immediate impression of the heavenly vision would account for the suddenness and dispatch of the execution. But leisure is afforded for reflection; partial affection has time to strengthen itself; the powerful pleadings of nature must in their turn be heard; the oppression of grief, of fatigue, of old age; the sight, the society, the conversation of Isaac, combine their operation to make him relent, and return. But though nature knows, faith, such as Abraham's, knows not what it is to relent. With steady steps, and unshaken resolution, he advances to the fatal spot, now first distinguished by the choice of God, for the scene of this wonderful sacrifice; distinguished in the sequel, as the seat of empire and of religion among Abraham's chosen race; and finally, distinguished most of all, by a sacrifice infinitely more valuable and important, and of which this of Isaac was but a shadow.

Being arrived at the foot of the mountain, which was pointed out by some sensible token, the servants are left behind, and Abraham armed with the fire and the knife, and Isaac bearing the wood destined to consume the victim, ascend together. And now, had his faith been capable of failing, could his purpose have changed, the question which Isaac,

in the simplicity of his heart, proposed, must have triumphed over his resolution, and decreed the victory to flesh and blood. "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son: and he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together." The heart that feels not this is lost to sensibility. Every endeavour to illustrate or enforce it, were idle as an attempt to perfume the rose, to paint the tulip into richer tints, or to burnish the sun into a brighter lustre.

At length with weary steps they arrive at the place which God had told him of. The mighty secret, which had hitherto laboured in the anxious paternal breast, must at last be disclosed, and "the lamb for the burnt-offering" must be produced. It is not the sacrifice of a bullock or a sheep, which are able to make no resistance; nor of a child unconscious of its situation; but of a man, whose consent must be obtained; and who either by entreaty, by argument, by speed, or by force, might have delivered himself. The Jewish historian presents us with the dialogue which passed between the father and the son on this occasion, striking and pathetic indeed, but far inferior to the beautiful simplicity of Moses. Having built an altar, having laid the wood in order upon it, and made all other necessary preparation, the unhappy father is thus represented

as communicating to the devoted victim the will of the Most High: "O my son, begged of God in a thousand prayers, and at length unexpectedly obtained; ever since you were born, with what tenderness and solicitude have I brought you up! Proposing to myself no higher felicity than to see you become a man, and to leave you the heir of my possessions. But the God who bestowed you upon me demands you again. Prepare then to yield the sacrifice with alacrity. I give you up to him, who at all seasons, and in all situations, has prosecuted us with loving kindness and tender mercy. You came into the world under the necessity of dying; and the manner of your death is to be singular and illustrious, presented in sacrifice by your own father to the great Father of all; who, we may presume, considers it as unfit and unbecoming, that you should depart out of this life by disease, in war, or by any other of the usual calamities to which human nature is subject; but who waits to receive your spirit as it leaves the body, amidst the prayers and vows of your affectionate parent, that he may place it in perfect blessedness with himself. There, you shall still be the consolation and support of my old age, not indeed by your presence and conversation, but bequeathing me, when you depart, the presence and the blessing of the Almighty." Isaac, the worthy offspring of such a father, cheerfully complies, and piously answers, "I should be un-

“worthy of life, were I capable of showing reluctance to obey the will of my Father and my God. It were enough for me that my earthly parent alone called me to the altar, how much more, when my heavenly Father re-demands his own.”

He accordingly submits to be bound, and to be laid as a victim upon the wood. And now behold a sight from which nature shrinks back, and stands confounded;—a father, lifting up his hand armed with a deadly weapon, to slay his only son. He has already made the sacrifice: for with God intentions are acts; and he receives his Isaac a second time from the hand that gave him at first. The voice of God is again heard. It is ever welcome to the ear of faith: welcome when it announces heavy tidings, welcome when it demands an Isaac; and O, how welcome, when it brings glad tidings of great joy; when it says, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me!”

Abraham prophesied without being conscious of it, when he said, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:” for lo, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son.” We know but in part, and we prophesy in part, but God sees the end from the beginning; “he is the

“Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

With what different feelings does the Patriarch descend from ~~the~~ mountain! His Isaac lives, and yet his sacrifice is offered. He came to yield his dearest earthly delight at the call of God, and he goes away enriched with new blessings and fresh promises. Who ever sacrificed to God and was a loser? “Who ever hardened himself against God and prospered?”

It is impossible that any one can be so inattentive as not to observe, through the whole of this wonderful history, the mystery of redemption shadowed forth. Is the divine conduct in this trial of Abraham, dark and inexplicable to human reason? Angels desire to look into the plan of Gospel salvation, and are unable to comprehend it. Was Abraham ready at God's command to offer up his only son for a burnt offering? “God himself so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” God had pity upon an afflicted earthly father, and a devoted child, and sent his angel to deliver him: but God “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” Isaac was *ready* to be slain, Jesus was actually put to death. Isaac cheerfully submitted to the will of Heaven, and offered his throat to the sacrificing knife; and of Jesus it is written in the sacred vo-

hime, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O God ; thy law is within my heart." "He gave himself for us, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God."

Isaac having first typified the Saviour, passes into a type of the elect sinner, bound and stretched upon the altar, in trembling apprehension of the fatal blow. *He* is reprieved by a voice from Heaven ; and thus, when there was no eye to pity, nor hand to save our sinful devoted race, a voice is heard from the most excellent glory, "Deliver from going down to the pit ; I have found a ransom." "I have laid help on one who is mighty to save." Behold the ram caught in the thicket, conducted and detained of Providence, and substituted as a sacrifice in the room of Isaac, and think of him of whom it is written, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." From the tendered sacrifice of Isaac, arose new prospects and new promises to his family : from the death of Christ sprung up the hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," to all them that believe. The substituted sacrifice was of God's appointment, providing, and acceptance, both in the figurative and the real history, and by both we are instructed, that when

men have the wisdom to submit to, and follow God their Maker, they may safely commit the issue of all to him.

To view the history of Abraham in detached parts, is to involve ourselves in difficulty and distress,—to read patiently to the end, is the road to light, and peace, and joy. The prejudiced Jew, and the self-conceited Greek, look at the cross and pronounce it foolishness, or fall over it as a stumbling block : but to them that believe, who wait the issue, who look to the end, “ Jesus Christ is the power of God and “ the wisdom of God.” Presumptuous men will take upon them to judge of a plan, which is not executed, and will proudly apply to the narrow and erroneous scale of their own reason and understanding, the infinite and eternal designs of the only wise God. When the fabric of creation was completed, God pronounced all to be very good, and then “ the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy : ” when the plan of redemption is executed, then, and not till then, let men or angels presume to judge of the fitness or unfitness of it. Determine nothing before the time. The Lord, and the day of the Lord, is at hand.

In meditating on this history, may it not be asked—Who among you is with Abraham sacrificing, I do not say, his lawful joys, but his sinful lusts ? Who among you is rising up early, and with a resolute hand, slaying his sloth, his pride, his avarice, his lust, his malignity before the altar of God ? Who among you is rising betimes to “ offer

“unto God thanksgiving;” to contemplate the glories of nature; to adore and admire the wonders of Providence; to look into the mystery of redemption, and to meditate with new and increasing delight, on that “love of Christ which passeth knowledge?”

The little good which we do, we wish to be seen of all men: not like Abraham, who would have his devotion neither witnessed nor interrupted by any one. But glory pursues true goodness, notwithstanding its own modesty and humility. Why should I suffer myself to be teased and vexed with the cavils of an unbeliever? Let him start ten thousand objections, if he will, to the frame of nature, the conduct of Providence, or the method of salvation. I will thus simply reply; *Do you comprehend the whole? Are you of the privy council of Heaven? Can you account for any thing you behold? Do you know to what all these things tend, and in what they are to issue?*

Rest, Christians, in general, obvious, useful, practical truth; and know that devotedness to God is the essence of religion, and the sum of human happiness. Look forward to that day when light shall arise out of obscurity, when all mysteries shall be unveiled; when the faculties of the human mind shall be strengthened and increased, and the objects contemplated shall be brought nearer the eye, placed in a fairer point of view, and irradiated with a fuller glory; when God shall in the most complete and satisfactory manner vindicate his ways to men.

The next Lecture will conclude the History of Abraham, and the proposed Course for this season. If to your former attendance and kind attention, you will indulge me with one audience more, it will increase the affectionate regard of a grateful heart, and afford an opportunity of expressing that gratitude at greater length. May God bless all the means of knowledge, of piety, and of improvement. Amen.

LECTURE XVIII.

HEBREWS XI. 13—16.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises; but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

WHAT is the amount of human life? vanity and vexation of spirit. All our wanderings tend towards the grave. The anxieties and solicitude, the hopes and fears, the disappointments and successes, which alternately occupy and agitate the mind, at length come to one issue, and all-conquering death settles the account. The time is at length come that Sarah must pay the debt of nature. That beauty which conjugal affection doated on, and which princes coveted; becomes deformed with wrinkles; the cold hand of death chills the fond maternal heart, and even the delight of an Isaac is enjoyed no more. The Jewish Rabbins, fruitful in legends, affirm, that grief for the sacrifice of Isaac shortened her life. For that the Devil, who had exulted in the

prospect of seeing Isaac perish by the knife of his father, to revenge himself for the disappointment which he felt upon his deliverance by the Angel, conveyed intelligence to Sarah that the sacrifice was actually performed; which news speedily proved fatal to her. As if the oppressive weight of one hundred and twenty-seven years did not sufficiently account for the death of a frail woman, without the necessity of a preternatural interposition.

Affecting change! The eyes of Abraham himself cannot now endure to look upon her, whom once he shuddered to think that the eyes of another should behold with too much desire; and he is now as eager to bury her out of his sight, as he formerly was to retain the possession of her wholly to himself. Let the beautiful and the vain, the gay, the admired, and the flattered, think of this and be humble. The latter end of her life, however, is better than the beginning. Tormented with the unaccomplished desire of having children, subjected to all the hardships of a pilgrimage state, and stung with the keen pangs of jealousy almost up to her ninetieth year, life at length subsides into a delightful calm of thirty-seven years more, cheered and cherished by the unabated affection of her beloved lord, and blessed with the progress and accomplishments of the son of her womb, Isaac, the favourite of God and man. But she must finally make one remove more; not to that country from which she came out, but to that land "from whose bourn no traveller returns." A partaker as of the fortunes,

so of the faith of Abraham, she sees the promises afar off, is persuaded of them and embraces them ; she desires and looks for another country, that is, an heavenly.

God had promised to Abraham and his seed the possession of Canaan, and lo, it commences in the purchase, at their full value, of a little field and a cave, for a burying-place. He had been threatened with a severe stroke in the demanded sacrifice of Isaac ; he is made to feel one in the loss of Sarah. The mellowed friendship of so many years, and union cemented at last by so dear a pledge, could not be dissolved without pain. Abraham is sensible of his loss, and bewails it. His religion is not of that sort which values itself on doing violence to nature ; he knows nothing of that vain philosophy which affects to deny what it feels ; neither has an old age of one hundred and thirty-seven years, extinguished in the heart those tender emotions, which the deprivation of an object, once fair, and ever dear, naturally excites. He who does not weep on such an occasion as this is something more or less than a man. But to persevere in bewailing the dead, to the neglect of our duty to the living, is both folly and impiety. Abraham's sorrow encroaches upon none of the valuable principles of a good mind. His whole conduct in the purchase of the field of Ephron the Hittite, and the cave of Machpelah, exhibits a soul replete with the most amiable and respectable virtues. Tender and affectionate, he is desirous of honouring in death the remains of what

he prized in life. Noble-minded, generous, and independent, he refuses to show respect to the memory of Sarah with that which cost him nothing. Civil and polite, he repays the courtesy of his neighbours with affability and condescension. Scrupulously just and honest, he will give nothing less than the full price, and in full tale, weight, and purity, for what was frankly tendered to him as a gift. The dialogue of the twenty-third chapter of Genesis is a masterly picture of the beautiful simplicity of ancient manners, and exhibits a strife of unaffected kindness, good-nature, and civility, which at once pleases and instructs. Let me beseech you to peruse it carefully when opportunity offers. Would to God such contentions were more frequent in the world. The purchase is made, the price is paid, possession is made sure, and then was Sarah buried. And thus, first, Abraham became seized of the land of promise. So differently does Providence shape events from our preconception of them.

It is worthy of observation, that this is the first money transaction which we read of in the world. Till then, and long after, both among the posterity of Abraham and other nations, wealth was estimated by the number and quality of cattle; and cattle were the principal instruments of commerce. Thus we read in many places of Homer, of a coat of mail worth an hundred oxen; a caldron worth twenty sheep; a cup or goblet worth twelve lambs, and the like. The words belonging to commerce, or ex-

change of commodities, in the Greek language, are mostly derived from the names of certain animals, by means of which that exchange was originally carried on. Thus the word itself, which signifies to *truck*, or *commute* one kind of goods for another, is derived from that which signifies a *lamb*; the verb which is translated to *sell*, comes from the noun, which translated, signifies a *colt* or young horse; the Greek word, which in our language is to *buy*, comes from that which signifies an *ass*: the term that denotes *rent* or *revenue*, and that which signifies a *sheep*, are of kindred composition and import. A criminal, according to the magnitude of his guilt, was condemned to pay a fine of four, twelve, or an hundred oxen. A *wealthy person* is called a man of *many lambs*. Two rival brothers are represented in Hesiod, as fighting with each other about the *sheep* of their father; that is, contending who should be his heir. But even so early as the time of Abraham, we find silver employed as a more commodious medium of traffic; and the concurrence of all civilised and commercial nations, to this day, in employing the precious metals for this purpose, is a proof, how early men learned the wisdom of this world; and it discovers to us, how readily they invent, how accurately they reason, and how prudently they act, in matters that are conducive to their temporal interest and advantage. But to return—By the death of Sarah, the care and anxiety about the dear object of their common affection becomes naturally much increased to the surviving pa-

rent. Isaac was now arrived at man's estate, and it is fit that the heir of the promise should be established in a family of his own. For how are the promises of God brought into effect, but by the intervention of the means which Nature and Providence have appointed? Abraham, with the solicitude of a good father, is desirous of matching his son, rather prudently and piously, than nobly or wealthily. In these days of simplicity and nature, the partner for life was sought after, not for the largeness of her possessions; but gold, and silver, and jewels, were employed to court beauty and virtue to their proper sphere of importance and usefulness in life. Abraham judges it unwise to marry his son into a Hittite family, because they had deviated from the worship of the true God. He could estimate their hospitality, kindness, and civility, as they deserved, without falling in love with their religion. And he who cannot make this distinction must either be unfaithful to God, or unfriendly to man. Affecting view of the corruption and degeneracy of human nature! That Isaac, the son of faithful Abraham, should be deemed in greater danger of being perverted by an idolatrous wife, than that a woman of Canaan should be probably converted to the worship of the living and true God, by a believing husband.

Isaac, it would appear, devoted to retirement and contemplation, little attached himself to the concerns of this life. The management of his affairs, and his settlement in the world, he leaves to the

wisdom of his father, and the fidelity of an ancient domestic. The journey of that servant into Mesopotamia, and the success of it, belong more properly to the history of Isaac. As far as Abraham is concerned in it, we behold a holy man acknowledging God in all his ways, and making the ordinary concerns of life a religious service: and we see God, in return, directing every step to a happy issue.

Having seen his beloved son settled entirely to his satisfaction, he enters again himself into the honourable state of marriage, and is blessed in it by a progeny of six sons and ten grand-children born in his life-time. In order to prevent strife after his death, as far as human sagacity and foresight could do it, and knowing that property is the great source of contention among men, he settles his worldly affairs, bequeathing the great bulk of his fortune to Isaac, the son of his first and principal wife; following in this the destination of Providence, and fulfilling the condition of the covenant under which Rebekah was induced to become Isaac's wife. He makes a suitable provision for the younger branches of his family, and sends them, by dint of his paternal authority, into a distant part of the country, while he yet lived, that the quiet and peaceable temper of Isaac might not be exposed to disturbance and trouble, from the neighbourhood of ambitious, violent, or avaricious brothers, after his death.

That fatal period at length overtakes him also, and he comes to the grave, "like as a shock of corn cometh in his season," in a good old age, "an old

“man, and full of years,” at the age of one hundred threescore and fifteen. A life shorter by far than any we have hitherto studied, but much fuller of incidents and events. A life chequered with uncommon trials, and enriched with blessings as extraordinary : a life distinguished by the most brilliant virtues which adorn human nature, but not wholly exempted from its frailties and infirmities. Abraham purchased a grave for Sarah. Alas ! he was only providing a habitation for himself ! How short, how unimportant the distance between the funeral rites which we prepare, and those which are prepared for us !

But can this be all that God intended to bestow upon our Patriarch by promises so lofty, and conveyed in language so solemn ? Was it for this he was called to leave his country and his father’s house ? Did vision upon vision, covenant upon covenant, promise upon promise, conduct only to a little cave in Hebron ? Was the favour of the Almighty, the all-bountiful Jehovah, expressed to the man whom he dignified by the title of his friend, only by such things as are the common gifts of his Providence to all, and which are often bestowed on the vilest and most worthless of mankind ? If the grave were to terminate the existence of man, such questions would be indeed of difficult solution. But the difficulty of them scatters and disperses before one word of God, spoken three hundred and thirty years after the Patriarch’s death, even to Moses at the bush in Horeb. *I am the God of Abraham.* His

relation to God was as entire three centuries after his body was consumed in dust in Machpelah, as when he was entertaining angels in Mamre, or sacrificing upon Mount Moriah. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." To Him, and for Him, and with Him, now live the faithful of all past ages, and precious is their very dust in his sight. Judge nothing, then, before the time, till the day come which shall unfold the purpose of Heaven, which shall clear up the mystery of Providence, and fully vindicate the ways of God to man.

It appears that some intercourse between Ishmael and his father's family had been kept up; for we find him apprised of Abraham's death, and assisting at his funeral. He must be a wild man indeed, not to have been tamed, at least into a temporary sorrow, by such an event, and melted into forgetfulness of all past resentments, by the death of a father. Providence wisely produces this good effect, by the common calamities wherewith families are visited; they tend to reconcile the alienated; they extinguish bitterness and strife, they re-kindle the dying embers of filial duty and brotherly love. Isaac and Ishmael, men of different natures, of opposite interests, rivals from the womb, forget all animosity, and mingle tears over a father's tomb.

It remains, in conformity to our plan, that we point out, in a few particulars, the resemblance betwixt Abraham and Christ, that we may see where in the former typified the latter.

Abraham, at God's command, leaving his coun-

try and his father's house, points to us obviously Jesus, at the fulness of time, leaving Heaven's glory, and the bosom of the Father, and coming into our world, and living a pilgrim and a stranger in it. Abraham, in a land which was his own by the gift and promise of God, nevertheless obtained no fixed residence in it, but wandered about from place to place; Jesus, in a world which he made and upholds, which is *his* by the most undeniable title, was without a place where to lay his head. Abraham was called the friend of God, and to him God communicated his purposes of mercy and of judgment: Jesus the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and knows intimately the mind of the Lord, he hath declared him. With Abraham God established the political covenants which secured to him and his family the possession of Canaan, and all the temporal and spiritual blessings of a transitory and preparatory economy: Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises; even the covenant of redemption, whereby the kingdom of Heaven, and eternal life, are made sure to all his spiritual seed; for thus it is written of him, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations;" and "according to his abundant mercy, he hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." In Abraham, we venerate

the natural head of a great family, raised up, multiplied, preserved, and distinguished by the hand of Providence to this day. Of Christ, "the whole family of Heaven," and all the families of the earth "are named;" "and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Abraham stands forth the typical representative, father, and pattern of believers: Christ is "the head of the body the church," the real source of a spiritual and divine life to all them who believe.

Abraham's intercession in behalf of Sodom, and Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem, are a beautiful and striking counterpart to each other. The sacrifices which Abraham and Christ respectively offered up unto God, wonderfully illustrate and explain one another.

But in the midst of so many marks of resemblance, who does not by a glance discern as many characters of dissimilitude; and an infinite superiority justly claimed by him, who "in all things must have the pre-eminence?" Who shall declare *his* generation, who saith of himself, "Before Abraham was, I am?" Abraham was a man of like passions with us, and even the father of the faithful stumbled and fell; Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," and the prince of this world himself, when he came, found nothing in him. Abraham was ready to offer up Isaac: Christ actually offered himself, a sacrifice of "a sweet smelling savour unto God." The faith of Abraham could not redeem him from death; the power of Christ tri-

umphed over the grave. The first covenants, being of a temporary nature, having fulfilled their design, are passed away. The New Testament in the blood of Christ, being for everlasting, continues in full force, and shall last while sun and moon endure, nay, when "all these things shall be dissolved."

Being arrived at one of the great epochs in the history of the world, we shall just for a moment look back, and mark the link which connected this period with the flood, and even with the antediluvian world; giving you only names and dates, for the sake of brevity. Shem, the second son of Noah, and father of Arphaxad and of all the children of Heber, to whom the family jewel, that is, the promise of the Messiah, was committed, who saw two of the great calamities of the world and outlived them, the deluge, and the confusion of languages, and who lived no doubt to see and rejoice in Abraham and Isaac as the heirs of the promise; Shem, I say, is the great link of these two eras of the world; for he lived before the flood ninety-eight years, and after it five hundred and two, of consequence he died only twenty-five years before Abraham. His life accordingly may be calculated thus, with regard to the great personages and events with which he was connected. Before the flood he lived ninety-eight years; after the birth of his own son Arphaxad five hundred; after the death of Arphaxad sixty-one; after the death of Noah one hundred and fifty-two; after the confusion of tongues three hundred and forty-eight; after the death of Sarah thir-

teen ; before the birth of Jacob ten ; before the birth of Moses two hundred and seventy-five : when Abraham was one hundred and fifty years old, Isaac fifty, and before the descent into Egypt one hundred and forty. The chronology of Abraham's life, according to the Scripture account, stands thus : **H**e died in the one hundred and seventy-fifth year of his age, and of the world two thousand one hundred and eighty-three ; before the birth of Christ one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one ; after he discomfited and slew Chedorlaomer and the other kings ninety-one ; after the intended sacrifice of Isaac fifty ; after the death of Sarah thirty-eight ; after his marriage with Keturah thirty-five ; after the death of Shem twenty-five ; before the descent into Egypt one hundred and fifteen : when Isaac was seventy-five years old ; Esau and Jacob fifteen ; Ishmael eighty-nine ; and Heber, his great grandfather, from whom the name of Hebrew comes, four hundred and sixty. " By faith he sojourned in the " land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling " in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him " of the same promise," and when he gave up the ghost, was buried in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, by his sons Isaac and Ishmael.

And thus, my friends, we have, through the help of God, finished the first part of the plan of these Lectures. And the season of interruption and separation being now come, permit me, with a heart overflowing with affection and gratitude, to return you my sincere thanks, for your regular attendance,

and patient attention. You were invited hither with much humility and diffidence; you have come hither with much alacrity and steadiness, and you must not depart hence, without bearing along with you the grateful acknowledgments of the Lecturer. He has the consolation of believing, that as neither he nor his undertaking are the creatures of party, or of human system, nor aim at any interest, but those of virtue, good sense, and religion, so they have been encouraged by wise and good men of various sects and denominations. He humbly hopes he has interfered with the happiness, fame, or usefulness of no good man whatever. If he has led any one to read the Bible more carefully, to trace the connexion betwixt the Old and New Testament characters, institutions, and events, more accurately; to trace the ways of Providence more closely; or to feel the powers of a world to come more sensibly, verily he has his reward.

But he affects not fastidiously to undervalue some considerations of inferior importance—he dwells with secret delight on the disinterested attachment and generous services of his private friends: his heart glows at the public marks of regard he has received; and the temporal emolument arising from his labours he receives with much thankfulness to you, and to that kind Providence, which is pleased to smile upon another effort to rear up a numerous family. May the kindness you have shown to the Preacher return a thousand fold upon your own heads. The God of love be with you all. Amen.

LECTURE XIX.

ZECHARIAH I. 5, 6.

Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? And they returned and said, Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

REFLECTIONS upon the shortness of human life, and upon the uncertainty of sublunary enjoyments, naturally present themselves in the various changes which we daily observe, and daily feel. But alas! our reflections are too superficial and transitory, to produce habitual superiority to the world, uniform submission to the will of God; and efficacious impressions of eternity. Wasting and decaying every hour, we form and prosecute schemes for futurity, as if "our strength were the strength of stones, and our bones brass." Reflecting and reasoning like men, we live and act like children; and we pursue the bauble of the moment, as if it were the pearl of great price. When the drama of human life is ended, and the curtain drops, lo, it has shrunk to a measure so small, and contains events of so little importance, that it is difficult to render a reason why Man should have existed at all;

and we are constrained to cry out with the Psalmist, "Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity; surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain."

But my text greatly relieves this apparent insignificance of our fleeting existence in this world, by conveying to us this important idea, that the divine Providence is carrying on its great and wise designs, by means of feeble, short-lived, and sometimes even by worthless instruments: and the date of our latter end is wisely and mercifully hidden from our eyes; and every man is taught to consider himself, his life, his actions, as of importance, that we may exert ourselves to the last, and "do with our might whatsoever our hand findeth to do." Though our *Fathers* are no more, and the *Prophets* do not live *for ever*, yet the *words* and *statutes* which God commanded his servants the Prophets, "took hold of our fathers, and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." This leads us, in a direct road, to make a just estimate of the lives and actions of other men; and to consider seriously how we order our own conversation; how we spend our own days and years.

In the preceding series of Lectures, we endeavoured, beginning at Adam and ending with Abraham, historically to delineate, and practically to improve, the lives of those venerable men, by whom

the world was first peopled, instructed, and governed : and who, in their persons, by their actions, or by the events which befell them; successively typified or foretold the great Saviour and Deliverer of the human race, during a period of more than two thousand years. By entering into the spirit of the Prophet Zechariah, in the words now read, we shall be enabled to review that period with profit and delight, and this review shall serve to introduce the History of the other lives which the Sacred Volume, in succession, presents to our observation, and has sketched for our information and improvement.

In Adam, we behold, at once, our natural first Father, and our federal Head : from whom as men our existence is derived, and by whose conduct our character has been deeply affected, and our state, in some respects, determined. “ Our father *Adam*, “ where is he ? ” He fulfilled his day, he accomplished the purposes of God, he then fell asleep, and is now seen no more. But, however remote the date of his formation, and of his death ; however distant from us the region in which he lived ; however apparently unconnected with us he may be, in interest, in fame, or fortune, we are, we know, we feel ourselves, deeply involved in what he was, and in what he did. In Adam we all died ; we all forfeited a natural, and lost a spiritual and divine life ; and, in Adam, we received the promises which have since been fulfilled ; and to him, first, were opened prospects which the course of Providence has realized, of the restoration of our fallen nature,

by "One greater Man," who has regained for us seats more blissful, than those from which by transgression Adam fell; even the "seed of the woman," "who has bruised the serpent's head." Our first Father, where is he? Lost indeed to us, but not to God. All traces of him, excepting those only which perpetuate the memory of his guilt, and its woful consequences, are effaced and forgotten; but his station before God remains unchanged, his importance undiminished. Dead to us, he lives to Him with whom "a thousand years are as one day, "and one day as a thousand years."

Can we meditate upon the first man who *was created* upon the earth, without rising, in our thoughts, to Him who *created* him out of the dust of the ground, and "breathed into his nostrils the "breath of life?" and who "has of one blood "formed all nations of men to inhabit upon the face "of the whole earth?" Can we think of our father after the flesh, and not connect with him the idea of our Father who is in Heaven? Is not the painful recollection of him in whom *all died*, happily relieved and done away, by reflecting on the glorious second Adam, in whom an elect world is *made alive*? And O, how is the loss of an earthly paradise compensated by the promise of "new heavens, and a "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," that paradise of God, in the midst of which grows the *tree of life*, always blossoming, always bearing fruit, and exempted from the dangerous neighbourhood of the *tree of knowledge* of good and evil?

Our brother Abel, where is he? Cut off in the bloom of life; fallen, fallen by the hand of a brother; but immortal by his faith and piety, qualities which are not liable to the stroke of death. By faith he offered to God an excellent, and an acceptable sacrifice. In presenting the firstlings of his flock, he had a respect to the great Lamb of atonement, and thereby "being dead he yet speaketh." Prematurely taken away, but not for a crime; a victim to malice and envy, he typified "Messiah the prince, cut off, but not for himself," crucified and slain, in the prime of life, by the impious hands of his nearest kindred. And, living under the influence of the same principle, we too shall become immortal, shall "endure as seeing him who is invisible," and "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service."

In the life, and more particularly in the exit, of the Patriarch Enoch, life and immortality were more clearly brought to light. Hitherto men had terminated their earthly course by descending into the grave, and by "seeing corruption;" but, when we come to inquire concerning Enoch, "Where is he?" The Scriptures reply, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." "He was not, for God took him." Our thoughts here settle, not on the gloomy mansions of the dead, "the house appointed for all

“living,” but on the regions of eternal day, irradiated with the glory, and beautified with the presence of God. We rise, in faith and hope, to that bright world from which first Christ descended, and to which, having finished his work, and achieved his victory, he afterwards re-ascended, leading “captivity captive.” And all who are partakers of the same precious faith, contemplate, with joy, that same mansion of everlasting rest, “prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and ready to be revealed in the last time,” when the body shall be redeemed from the power of the grave, and the Saviour, lifted up on high, shall draw all men unto him. In Enoch walking with God, and passing immediately, soul and body, from earth to Heaven, the world that then was saw, in a figure, Him that was to come, whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his Heavenly Father, and who has opened a passage, through the very gates of death, into the heavenly World; and that, not for himself only, but for all who believe in his name, and who love his appearing. Enoch our father, Where is he? There, O my soul! There, O my Christian friend, where, through the grace that is in Christ Jesus, we have everlasting consolation, in the good hope of arriving also. “O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Advancing to the times of Noah, we behold the

world first deluged with an overflowing flood of sin, and then, with an inundation of waters. The measure of human iniquity is full, and the vials of divine wrath are filled, in order to punish it, up to the brim, and then poured out upon an impious generation, to its utter extinction and ruin. Nevertheless a remnant is saved, and mercy rejoices in the midst of judgment. Animated by the same principle which inspired his venerable ancestors, that principle which gave value to Abel's sacrifice, which strengthened Enoch to walk with God, and through which he was translated without tasting of death, Noah "prepared an ark for the saving of his house."

The history and method of redemption, by the Lord Jesus Christ, are so clearly prefigured in every part of this wonderful event, that he who runs may read them. Noah, "a just man and perfect in his generations;" Noah, who "walked with God," and was "a preacher of righteousness;" Noah, who "warned of God of things not seen as yet, and moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house," is evidently, in all these characters and actions, a type of the *holy and just One*, whom the world despised and rejected; a type of "the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared him" unto men; a type of the great "Teacher sent from God," to warn a guilty, devoted race, to flee from the wrath to come, and to conduct them to a place of safety; a type of Him, who, chosen of God, and moved by pity and affection, prepared a present refuge, and an ever-

lasting habitation, for perishing sinners. Of Noah, his pious, prophetic father, when he imposed his name, exultingly exclaimed, "This name shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed:" and in the blessed Redeemer of mankind, all his pious, believing children enjoy the prospect of a period, and of a world, wherein "there shall be no more curse;" and on whom the eternal Father, by the tongue of an Angel, imposed the name of *Jesus*, because he should "save his people from their sins."

Noah our father, where is he? Where is the man who was Enoch's contemporary, who conversed with the sages of the old world, who saw the Globe one vast Ocean; whom all the waters of a deluge could not drown; who received a grant of the whole renewed Earth for an inheritance? All these successive changes led but to the grave, and we see him no more. "All the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died." Let the possessor of a continent think of this, and check his pride; let florid, vigorous youth think of threescore years and ten; let him who is rearing a mansion of one thousand feet by five hundred, meditate on one of six by two.

The Ark, which he prepared for the saving of his house, where is it? It fulfilled its destination, it escaped the wreck of worlds, it preserved and rendered up its precious deposit,—then fell into decay.

It exists but in description, it has no form but what fancy has bestowed upon it, in a picture, or upon a coin. But its frame, its use, its end, its antitype, are immortal. That magnificent vessel, not the contrivance of man, but the appointment of God; constructed according to the pattern formed and prescribed by infinite Wisdom; preserved in the wild uproar of conflicting elements, by the almighty power of God: resting at length on solid ground, and unloading its precious treasure, without the loss of a single life, are so many successive, distinct, pleasing, and instructive views of the plan formed, followed, and in due time perfected, of man's deliverance from sin; and death, and hell, by the Lord Jesus Christ, who thus speaks of his redeemed, and of himself, in his last solemn address to his Heavenly Father, "While I was with them
"in the world, I kept them in thy name: those
"that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of
"them is lost;" and in another place, "I give unto
"them eternal life, and they shall never perish,
"neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.
"My Father which gave them me is greater than
"all: and none is able to pluck them out of my
"Father's hand."

The emblems of the raven, of the dove, of the rainbow, of the altar, of the sacrifice, and others which enter into the History of this Patriarch, are beautiful and significant illustrations of the same interesting and all-important subject; and the whole, taken together, satisfyingly demonstrate, that if

“ death reigned, from Adam to Noah,” and the offence abounded, yet “ grace did much more abound ;” and that, out of the ruins of human apostasy, guilt, and misery, the hand of Heaven was gradually rearing that glorious fabric of salvation, which, when completed, an enraptured Universe shall contemplate with astonishment and delight. “ This is the day which the Lord hath made : “ this is the Lord’s doing ; it is marvellous in our “ eyes.” The sight of the world restored, renewed, and blessed to Noah, the second father of the human race, leads us forward, borne on the wings of promise, to the still more magnificent prospect of “ the restitution of all things ;” to the day, when He who sitteth upon the throne shall say, “ Behold, “ I make all things new ;” when, according to his word, a new, more splendid, and more durable system of the Universe shall arise, under the plastic, purifying hand of the great Author and Finisher of the Christian faith, from the wreck of worlds consumed by fire ; when Jesus shall bring all his ransomed ones to Zion, with “ songs and everlasting “ joy upon their heads, when sorrow and sighing “ shall flee away.”

Sailing down the current of Sacred History, the plains of Mesopotamia, and Ur of the Chaldees, appear in sight ; and we behold an illustrious exile and his family, on their way from their country kindred, and father’s house, like the first pair expelled from Eden,

— All the world before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.

PARADISE LOST, Book xii.

We behold Abram, at God's command, going out, not knowing whither he went; Abram, the respected father of all them that believe, raised up of Providence, in the same important view, and to carry on the same grand design.

In the declarations which were made to him, we behold the plan of redemption assuming a clearer and more distinct form, unfolding and arranging its several parts. He who was promised to Adam, immediately upon the fall, under the more obscure description of "the seed of the woman," who should bruise the head of the serpent, was now announced to the world, as "the seed of Abram," in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. And henceforward, we have prediction upon prediction, ordinance upon ordinance, promise upon promise, event upon event, leading to, rising above, improving, enlarging upon each other, like the gradual light of the ascending sun, from the early dawn to the perfect day: we perceive types, shadows, ceremonies, sacrifices, disappearing by little and little; patriarchs, priests, prophets, lawgivers, and kings, retiring one after another, and giving place to "the Lord, our judge, our lawgiver, our king to save us:" as the twinkling fires of the night hide their diminished heads, and as the vapours disperse, before the glorious orb of day.

But Abraham our father, whither is he also gone? Even the faith which surrendered an Isaac at God's command, and which has for ever preserved his name from death, could not rescue his body from the power of the grave: it sleeps, and is dissolved, in the cave which was purchased from Ephron the Hittite. He had not a principle of life within himself, nor the power of communicating it to either his natural or spiritual posterity; but "the words" and the statutes which God commanded him, and "his other servants the Prophets, took hold of them," and they continue to lay hold of us. In the midst of all this mortality and change, one thing is immutable and eternal, the word, the purpose, the decree of the Most High. Heaven and earth may pass away, but it shall not pass away. Our father Abraham, where is he? Behold him in yonder world of bliss, with "Lazarus in his bosom," resting from all his own troubles, and cherishing the poor, the outcast, the afflicted, the tormented; enjoying "the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul," and "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of his body;" beholding Him "face to face, whom once he beheld afar off, and as in a glass darkly."

But, who is this that breaks out upon us, at once, in meridian glory? What bright day dazzles the wondering eye, a day preceded by no dawn, succeeded by no evening? It is Melchizedec, that "king of righteousness and peace," that "priest of the Most High God," whose generation none can

declare, whose nature and person none is able to describe. Is he but as one of the Prophets, or is he the Lord of the Prophets himself, pronouncing the blessing which he alone can confer; celebrating, in an early age, that Eucharist, which should be the memorial of Him till time expire? In him, whatever he was, whether a type, or the Son of God revealed; whether a shadow, or the substance; we behold the great leading object of Providence disclosed to our view; that priesthood which is unchangeable, that kingdom which shall never be destroyed, that Prince of peace who has reconciled guilty men unto God, that righteousness through which we have access with humble confidence to the throne of Grace. "Abraham rejoiced to see "that day." It strengthened him to wait patiently for the promised seed; it cheered his wanderings from place to place; it fortified his heart to the sacrifice of his Isaac; it laid his hoary head, in hope, in the dust.

Having, from this eminence, surveyed the ground through which we have passed, a delightful landscape, terminating in the distant hills of Eden, and watered by the fair river of PROMISE, meandering through its whole vast extent, we look forward to the happy plains, where Isaac pitched his tent, and Jacob fed his flocks; to the nations which Joseph saved by his wisdom, and ruled by his power. And, in our intended progress, Eternal Spirit of Wisdom! vouchsafe thou to be our instructor and our guide; point out to us the objects which deserve our notice;

enlighten our eyes, guard our hearts, direct the paths of our feet; what we know not, that do thou teach us; what we do know, help us wisely to improve. Following thee, "the crooked shall become straight before us, and the rough places plain; the sun shall not smite us by day; nor the moon by night: we shall go, from strength to strength," after them who "inherit the promises, till every one of us also in Zion appeareth before God."

Have you ground of pride and joy, my friends, in the recollection of your forefathers? Were they wise and good; blessed in themselves, and a blessing to the world? Take care that ye degenerate not from their virtues, that ye dishonour not their name, that ye swerve not from "the good old way" of piety, in which they trode. Is there, in the line of your ancestry, any circumstance humiliating and painful? Efface it, annihilate it, sink it, in a new existence derived from a celestial stock. Change the tainted, corrupted, current of an earthly pedigree, for the adopted honours, the gratuitous inheritance, the ennobled spirit of your Heavenly Father's love. Strive to be the first of your race; and leave to your heirs a possession better than the domains of princes; the savour of a good name, a pattern worthy of imitation, the remembrance of qualities which are not subject to the stroke of death.

You see, Christians, what is the leading, the commanding object, in the eye of eternal Providence—the salvation of a lost world by Jesus Christ; adopt

the same object, cleave unto it, keep it continually in view. All things else are vain and worthless, for they are passing quickly away. Our interest in, our hold of, this world, is diminishing every hour ; our consequence, as candidates for immortal bliss, as the heirs of glory, is rising in proportion. When we cease from importance, as the citizens of this earth, our real importance begins to be felt and understood. I recommend not sullen distance from your fellow creatures, nor peevish discontent. Live in the world, associate with mankind, enjoy your portion which God allotteth you. But use the world so as not to abuse it ; and while you are cumbered about *many* things, never forget that *one* thing is needful, and choose that good part which shall not be taken away from you.

While we speak, we change : and the hand of the executing angel is hastening to number us with the dead. We are going to join the venerable men whose memory we revere, whose faith we profess to follow, whose virtues we are bound to copy. Yet a little while, and time shall be no more, and we shall be contemporaries with our fathers who have preceded, and our children who are to follow us, until the final dissolution of this system. We look back to Adam the father of us all ; we look forward to his youngest son ; we look up, and “ see Heaven opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” We look around, and behold the nations of them that are saved bending before the throne ; we hear the Saviour’s voice, “ Here am I, and the children

“thou hast given me.” We hear the word of the Eternal Father proclaiming aloud, and the myriads of an assembled Universe, angels and men, joyfully echo it back, “All is good, yea very good.” Amen. Hallelujah!



LECTURE XX.

GENESIS XXV. 2.

And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi.

THOSE scenes in human life, which make the greatest figure in history, are far from being the most beneficial to mankind; neither were the persons, whose names have been transmitted to us with the most renown, and whose actions have dazzled posterity with their lustre, either the happiest in themselves, or the greatest blessings to the age in which they lived. To constitute one man a hero, how many garments must have been dyed in blood? And what are the acclamations of a triumph, but the miserable echo of the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying? We are this night to trace the History of a Man of peace; of one, who was not indeed exempted from his share of the ills which flesh is heir to, but whose afflictions, being private and domestic, were patiently borne by himself, and disturbed not the repose of others; of one, who, by the example of his piety and virtues, did more to instruct, and to bless mankind, than all the conquerors that ever existed, from Nimrod of Assyria down to Frederick of Prussia.

The life of Isaac, for seventy-five years of it, is blended with that of his illustrious father; for though, upon the face of the narration, the birth of Esau and Jacob does not appear till considerably after the death of Abraham, yet, by comparing dates, we find, that the young men must have been fifteen years old, when their grandfather died; and we may justly consider it as no slight trial of the faith, both of father and son, that Isaac, the heir of the promise, should live twenty years childless, from his marriage with Rebekah; but their patience of hope, their importunity of prayer, and their confidence of faith, are at length rewarded by two sons at once.

I mean not to recapitulate the extraordinary circumstances of Isaac's conception and birth, as they have already been considered in the History of Abraham. We shall only take up those particulars, which are more personal and peculiar; and in which Isaac himself was either an agent, or a sufferer. And we find him at an early period, indeed, feeling distress, and suffering persecution. The day he was weaned, how was the festivity of that joyful occasion embittered to his childish, innocent heart, by the cruel taunts and mockings of his brother Ishmael! It is remarkable, that almost all, at least the severest, trials of this Patriarch arose from his nearest and dearest relations. We behold him hated and scorned from the womb by his brother; devoted in sacrifice of his father; called early to mourn the loss of his affectionate mother; afflicted for twenty

years with the barrenness of his only and beloved wife; vexed; from their very conception, with the strife of his two sons, struggling for superiority: mortified, and grieved to the heart, with the inconsiderate, unwise, idolatrous marriages of his favourite Esau; practised upon, and deceived, in old age and blindness, by the address and cunning of his wife and younger son; involved in quarrel upon quarrel with his powerful neighbours, through the rashness and contentiousness of his servants: never faulty, yet throughout unfortunate. In truth, a man's liableness to distress and disappointment is in exact proportion to the number, and the quality, of the good things which he possesses. Do we enjoy peculiar delights? We are on the brink of danger.

At the partiality of Sarah to such a son as Isaac, we need not to be at all surprised. It is pleasant to observe, however, that it corrupted neither his understanding nor his heart. Neither the indulgence with which he was treated, nor the prospects to which he was born and brought up, seem to have rendered him, upon any occasion, insolent or assuming: and maternal fondness met with its dearest best reward, in filial duty and tenderness. Sarah lived respected, and died lamented, by her only and beloved son.

In reviewing the sacrifice of Isaac, I shall only make one remark, that this memorable transaction was not less a proof of the faith of Isaac, than that of Abraham himself. As the obedience of the fa-

ther was prompt and cheerful, so was that of the son. If the resignation of Abraham merits praise, the submission of Isaac claims no less, for his consent must have, undoubtedly, been obtained. In both, it was "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; and a reasonable service;" and the blessing which was pronounced from Heaven, on that occasion, applied to both equally, and in the same manner.

The next important event of Isaac's life, that stands upon the Sacred Record, is his marriage. Swallowed up of sorrow for the loss of his mother, or absorbed in devout meditation, he leaves all concern about his future fortunes, and his establishment in the world, to the care and wisdom of his father; and he thereby reproves the forwardness and self-sufficiency of many of our young [men, who presume to think for themselves in every thing, before they have learned to think at all; who attempt the works of men, with the understanding and the strength of children.

In the various particulars of this transaction, we have a beautiful and interesting picture of the simplicity of ancient manners and customs. Is it not a custom rather ancient and obsolete, to see all parties piously acknowledging God, upon such an occasion as this? Is it not rather uncommon to see a prudent father, anxious to match his only son with virtue and religion, not with rank and affluence, to the endangering of his moral and religious principles? With us, the most valuable accomplishments,

whether bodily or mental, go for nothing, unless set off with gold; but Rebekah, without a dowry, was, with jewels and gold, courted to the arms of Isaac. Has the female heart alone, in all ages, been the same; perpetually accessible to finery, presents, and praise? Where shall we now look for servants such as Abraham's, at once affectionate to his master, faithful to his trust, and filled with reverence to his God? This part of the history is an excellent commentary upon that injunction of the wise man, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Abraham's servant has hardly finished his address to Heaven, when lo, Providence, which works unseen, unknown, unobserved by us, has brought the subject of his prayer already to his eye. And in what place, in what employment, is the destined bride of Isaac found? Indolently reclined under a canopy of state; or issuing forth to breathe the evening air, accompanied by a numerous and splendid retinue of domestics? No, my fair hearers; Look at Rebekah, beautiful and young, and high born, bearing her pitcher on her shoulder to the well, to draw the evening's water for the family, and learn, that the humble, yet useful employments of domestic life are a virtuous woman's most honourable station; that, whether in virginity, wedlock, or widowhood, God and nature have destined you to occupations, not perhaps highly honourable in the eyes of unfeeling wealth, or of giddy dissipation, but highly consequential to the happiness of others, and therefore essential

to your own. Look yet again to Rebekah, and learn affability, and kindness, and condescension—learn, at once, to perform your duty, and to promote your interest. It suits your time of life, your sex, your natural propensities, to be gentle, to be courteous; and, believe me, it is equally conducive to your honour and advantage. The obliging deportment of Rebekah to the servant, paved the way to her advancement to the rank of his mistress. And can you think the dignity of Isaac's future wife, in the smallest degree, impaired by her civilities to his servant, or by her humanity to the poor dumb brutes which accompanied him? Believe me, an insolent, unfeeling, uncomplying young woman, is an odious, contemptible, unnatural, a monstrous, thing.

Look at Rebekah, yet once more, my beloved daughters, and learn openness, frankness, sincerity. Was she deficient in virgin modesty, that most attractive of all female graces, if when asked, "Wilt thou go with this man?" she ingenuously replied, "I will go?" No, but the honest simplicity of nature was not then corrupted, and disguised, by modes of behaviour, the beggarly refinement of modern education. Then, what the heart and conscience dared to avow, the cheek blushed not at hearing, and the tongue scrupled not to utter. Once more consider that attractive, that amiable creature; mark, I beseech you, as she approaches her destined lord, how female delicacy, how maiden diffidence

and reserve resume their empire? "She alighted off the camel, she ~~took~~ a veil and covered herself." And where, and how, was Isaac found of his fair spouse? He had gone out "to meditate, or to pray, in the field at the even-tide." This is the leading, prevailing lineament in the good man's character: a heart turned to devotion, an eye continually directed towards Heaven. Meditation and prayer are the right improvement of all mercies past, and the best preparative for mercies yet expected; they are a cordial balm for woes already come, an infallible antidote to the poison of those evils which we have yet to fear. What is not to be hoped for, from an union built on such a foundation? Behold, the fear and love of God on both sides; calmness, wisdom, fidelity, and affluence, on the part of the husband; humility, decency, meekness, frankness, and discretion, on the part of the wife: a mutual desire of pleasing and of being pleased. "Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

Thus wisely, and thus graciously hath God provided a suitable relief for every human calamity. And thus, Providence prepares us, in one form of the school of relative duty, for a higher, and a higher still, till we have filled every station with some degree of comfort and of credit. The transition from the character of a dutiful and affectionate son, to that of a kind and indulgent husband, is

natural and easy. And here, my young friends, you are furnished with a plain, but important rule, for forming the great choice of life. Is an undutiful child likely to make a good husband or wife? Have we reason to expect that one who has violated the first law of nature, of morality, of religion, will fall at once, and without preparation, into the more complicated, and more difficult, duties of the conjugal state?

But what lot of humanity is free from anxiety, free from disappointment, free from pain? The heir of Abraham's wealth, but that signifies nothing—the heir of the Promised Land, goes childless. Who is so foolish as to look for perfect happiness, in a world of vanity, in a valley of tears? Those to whom the blessing of children is denied are fretful and discontented; and those on whom it is bestowed are in terror, anxiety, and vexation, every hour. Happily, we hear of Rebekah's suggesting no dangerous, no unwarrantable expedient, as a remedy for this sore evil; and holy Isaac thinks of seeking relief there only, where he was accustomed to seek, and to find the cure of all his ills. “Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her: and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be

“ separated from thy bowels : and the one people
“ shall be stronger than the other people ; and the
“ elder shall serve the younger.” He asked a child,
and his prayer is answered, by the gift of two
sons, and thus Providence, often slower than our
wishes and desires, frequently compensates that
delay, by greatly outdoing our requests and expectations.

But lo again, how care and sorrow arise out of
our greatest comforts ! The children are hardly conceived, when their strife begins, and Isaac has as
much reason to entreat the Lord, that his wife
might be spared, in the pangs of an unnatural labour, as he formerly had, ~~that~~ she might be delivered from the infelicity of barrenness. Indeed
“ who knoweth what is good for man in this life,
“ all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as
“ a shadow ?” But this we know, “ that all things
“ work together for good, to them that love God,
“ to them who are the called according to his purpose.” The strife thus begun in the womb, becomes visible at the birth, and continues through life ; nay, it is transmitted to posterity.

The remark of the fanciful and ingenious Bishop Hall on the passage, is to this purpose. “ Before
“ Rebekah conceived she was at ease : so before
“ spiritual regeneration, all is peace in the soul ;
“ but no sooner is the new man formed in us, but
“ the flesh conflicts with the spirit : there is no
“ grace where there is no unquietness : Esau alone,
“ would not have striven ; for nature will ever agree

“ with itself. Never any Rebekah conceived only
“ an Esau, or was so happy as to conceive none but
“ a Jacob: she must be the mother of both, that
“ she may have both joy and exercise. This strife
“ began early: every true Israelite begins his war
“ with his being. How many actions which we
“ know not of, are not without presage and signifi-
“ cation. In this contest, Esau got the right of
“ nature, Jacob that of grace: yet, that there might
“ be some pretence of equality, lest Esau should
“ outrun his brother into the world, Jacob holds
“ him fast by the heel, so his hand was born before
“ the other’s foot: but, because Esau was some
“ minutes the elder, that the younger might have
“ better claim to that which God had promised, he
“ buys that which he could not win. If either
“ by strife, or purchase, or suit, we can attain spi-
“ ritual blessings, we are happy. Had Jacob come
“ out first, he had not known how much he was
“ indebted to God for his advancement.” Thus far
the Bishop.

And thus, at the age of threescore years, and after twenty years from his marriage with Rebekah, Isaac became the happy father of two hopeful sons. And here we pause. But before we conclude the Lecture, take a very few short hints respecting the analogy of Isaac, the son of Abraham, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

They were both raised up for one and the same purpose, namely, to manifest the mercy and love of God to fallen men; the one, as the bright and

morning star, to usher in the day; the other, as the meridian sun "travelling in the greatness of his strength." Isaac the natural root and progenitor of Christ: Christ the spiritual author, root, and head of Isaac! Isaac was the son of much expectation, and the subject of many prophecies. The set time of his birth was determined, and foretold, by Almighty Power, by unerring Wisdom, long before it happened: thus the birth of Christ, the desire of all nations, was announced to the world by a cloud of witnesses, not years, but ages, centuries, many centuries, before the time. The time, the place, all the circumstances attending it, were written as with a sun-beam, so as to render mistake impossible. Both Isaac and Christ were conceived out of the usual course of nature, that the finger of God might be seen and acknowledged in both events; Isaac, of a mother beyond the natural possibility of having children, Jesus, of an immaculate virgin. Isaac was early hated and persecuted of his brother, the son of his own father. And the persecution of Jesus, from the sinful world which he came to save, began at his birth, continued through the whole of his life, and issued in a shameful, painful, and accursed death. "He came to his own, and his own received him not. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

But what was seen, in "the mountain of the Lord," forms the closest resemblance, and affords the sublimest instruction. In the sacrifice, on

Mount Moriah, we behold the father and son like-minded, in presenting it cheerfully at the command of God. Abraham withheld not his son, his only son, and Isaac voluntarily surrendered himself as a lamb for a burnt offering. And on Mount Calvary, what do we behold? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" And Jesus gave himself for us "a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God." He "loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood." Here, also, the Father and Son are like-minded, and in the same view, and for the same end, the redemption of an elect world. "O the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God: it passeth knowledge!"

The private, personal character of Isaac, a man of calmness, contemplation, and peace; the dutiful son of his affectionate mother, the respectful observer of his father's will, might, without doing violence to the subject, be brought into comparison with the pure and perfect character of his antitype, whose spirit nothing could discompose, whose nights were spent in prayer, and his days in doing good; whose "meat and drink it was to do the will of his Heavenly Father, and to finish his work," and whose dying breath uttered the accents of filial affection, and provided a son, a protector, and a home, for his

desolate, afflicted mother. O the glorious excellency of that character, which exhibited the example of every personal, every relative virtue: which comprised the essence of all that is amiable in every other character, and which left all created goodness at an infinite distance behind! Look to Isaac, and be instructed: look to Jesus, and “grow in grace,” and go on towards perfection, and “press towards “the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, “in Christ Jesus.”

The next Lecture, with the Divine permission, will contain the remaining part of the life of Isaac, from the death of his father to his own. May God communicate saving knowledge to us all, by every means of instruction, and to his name be praise in Christ. Amen.

B.

LECTURE XXI.

GENESIS XXVI. 23—25.

And he went up from thence to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy Father; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

IT is a pleasing and instructive view of the Divine Providence, to behold one and the same great design carried on to maturity, in periods, and by persons, the most remote from each other, without the least intelligence, concurrence, or exertion, among themselves; to behold the great God moulding, guiding, subduing, the various passions, purposes, and private interests of men, to his own sovereign will; to behold the building of God rising in beauty, advancing toward perfection, by the hands of feeble workmen, who comprehend not the thousandth part of the plan which they help to execute, and who, instead of co-operating, frequently seem to counteract each other. One digs his hour in the quarry; another lifts up his axe, and strikes a stroke or two in the forest; a third applies the square and the compass to the stone which his neighbour had po-

lished; but their labours, their views, their abilities, however different, all promote the same end: and though they, and their endeavours, be frail and perishing, the work in which the Almighty employs them is progressive, is permanent, is immortal. Here a shepherd, there a king; here a little child, there a sage; here a legislator, there a conqueror; here a deluge, there a conflagration, fulfil the design of Heaven, and the glorious fabric of Redemption rises and rises, though Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles, sink, one after another, into the dust. Man often begins to build, but is unable to finish, because he had not counted the cost; but God "seeth the end from the beginning." He can never want an instrument, who has Heaven, earth, and hell at his disposal. "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee;" Satan is thy chained slave, and "ten thousand times ten thousand mighty angels minister unto thee." How then can thy aim be defeated? How can thy counsels fail?

The personal characters of the three leading Patriarchs of the house of Israel differ exceedingly in many respects; and their manner of life differs as much, while their leading principle is one and the same. The faith of Abraham, ardent and intrepid, was ever ready to encounter the most threatening dangers, to undertake the most difficult employments, and to render the most painful and costly sacrifices, at God's command. The faith of Isaac, placid and contemplative, sought the happiness of

communion with God, in calmness and solitude, and satisfied itself with the secret untumultuous delight, of beholding his family built up, and the promises of God advancing to their accomplishment. The faith of Jacob, active and persevering, wrought upon and excited by the peculiarities of his lot, supported a life of much bustle and industry; and surmounted disappointments and afflictions, the most mortifying and oppressive. For it is the office of this divine principle, not to alter, suppress, or eradicate the natural tempers and dispositions of men, but to guide, impel, or control them, in conformity to their proper destination.

Abraham, sensible of the ungovernable, encroaching spirit of Ishmael; sensible of the numerous and pressing claims of his younger children; and sensible of the gentle, yielding, unresisting nature of Isaac, had, with the prudent foresight of a good parent, made such a disposition of his temporal affairs in his life time, as was most likely to prevent contention and mischief after his death. Ishmael had been dismissed many years before: he had already become the head of many numerous and powerful tribes, "twelve princes according to their nations," and from habit, from inclination, and from necessity, had contracted a fondness for a roving, erratic course of life. He had been brought into a transient connexion with his brother Isaac, by an event which softens the most rugged and obdurate dispositions, the death of their common father; and their resentments, for a time at least,

perhaps for ever, are buried in the tomb of him to whom they owed their birth. But difference of interest, of affection, and of pursuit, speedily separates them again. Ishmael betakes himself to his favourite occupations in the desert, and Isaac abides quietly in his tent, tending his flocks, by the well Lahai-roi.

The sons of Abraham, by Keturah, had been more recently removed, with a suitable provision, into a distant part of the country. So that, upon his father's demise, Isaac found himself in the quiet possession of by far the greatest part of his immense wealth; but excluded from the society of those, whom sweetness of temper, sense of duty, and proximity of blood, would have led him to cultivate and to cherish. And thus, riches, the object of universal desire and pursuit, create more and greater wants, than those which they remove. By exciting envy, jealousy, and suspicion, they separate persons whom nature has joined; friendship is sacrificed to convenience; and, in order to enjoy, in security, what Providence has given him, the unhappy possessor is constrained to become an alien to his own brother. We cannot refrain from bestowing, in this place, a posthumous praise upon Abraham; who, uninfected by the tenacity of old age and selfishness, cheerfully surrendered, while he yet lived, a considerable part of his property, in order to ensure the future peace of his family; and wisely left his heir a poorer man, that he might leave him happier and more secure. How unlike those sordid

wretches, who will scatter nothing, till death breaks into the hoard; and who care not what strife and wretchedness overtake those who come after them, in the very distribution of their property, provided they can keep it all to themselves were it but for one day longer!

Isaac had, hitherto, trusted every thing to the wisdom and affection of his kind father, and to the care of an indulgent Providence; even so far, as to the choice of his partner for life. But his father being now removed by death, and his own children growing fast up upon him, he is under the necessity of arising and exerting himself. For, the blessing of Providence is to be asked and expected, only when men are found in the way of their duty, and are employing lawful and appointed means of prospering. We accordingly find him, with the prudent sagacity of a good husband, father, and master, directing the removal of his family from place to place, as occasion frequently required; we find him forming alliances with his powerful neighbours, for their mutual security: and presiding in the offices of religion, his favourite employment. And, though Providence has deprived him of the counsel and protection of an earthly parent, he finds, in his happy experience, that the man whom God continues to protect and bless has lost nothing. "Father and Mother have forsaken him, but the Lord has graciously taken him up," "has hedged him round on every side," and put the fear and dread of him into all the neighbouring nations; who, though they envied, yet durst not hurt him.

The distresses which embittered the remainder of Isaac's life were chiefly internal and domestic; and alas! they had their source in his own infirmity, namely, a fond partiality in favour of his elder son, the mischief of which was increased and kept alive by a partiality equally decided, which Rebekah had conceived in favour of Jacob. "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob." Most of the evils of a man's lot may be easily traced up to some weakness in which he has indulged himself, some error into which he has fallen, some opportunity which he has let slip, or some crime which he has committed. Of all the infirmities to which our nature is subject, no one is more common; no one is more unreasonable, unwise, and unjust; no one more easily guarded against; no one more fatal in its consequences to ourselves and others, than that of making a distinction between one child and another. It destroys the favourite, and discourages those who are postponed and slighted; it sows the seeds of jealousy and malice, which frequently produce strife, and violence, and blood. It sets the father against the mother, and the mother against the father; the sister against the brother, and the brother against the sister. It disturbed the repose of Isaac's family, and had well nigh brought down Jacob's hoary head with sorrow to the grave.

Parents ought to examine themselves very carefully on this head. If they are unable to suppress the feeling, the expression of it, at least, is in their power; and policy, if not justice, demands of them

an equitable distribution of their affection, their countenance, and their goods; for if there be a folly which more certainly than another wishes itself, it is this ill-judged and wicked competition between equals. One is ashamed to think of the reason which is assigned for Isaac's preference of his elder to his younger son, "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison." The original language expresses it more forcibly, "because his venison was in his mouth." By what groveling and unworthy motives are wise and good men frequently actuated? And what a mortifying view of human nature is it, to see the benevolence, prudence, and justice, and piety, vilely controlled and counteracted by the lowest, the grossest of our appetites? It was not long before the effect of parental partialities appeared. A competition for precedency, and the rights of primogeniture, engaged the attention of the brothers, and whetted their spirits against each other, from their earliest years. The pretensions of each were supported, respectively, by the parents, according as favour prompted; to the disregard of every maxim of good sense, and of the destination and direction of the divine Providence. Who prevailed in this contention, and by what means, will be seen in the sequel.

While the family of the Patriarch was thus torn with internal dissension, Providence had been pleased to visit him with a grievous external calamity. "There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham." This

for a while represses animosity. Distress common to all teaches them to love each other ; and instead of a struggle for precedence, the weightier concern, " Where shall we find bread ? " now occupies their thoughts. This dispensation was, probably, intended as a reproof and correction to all parties. The parents were admonished of the folly of aiding and increasing the unavoidable ills of life, by wilfully sowing discord among brethren. Esau, ready again to perish with want, is stung with remorse to think, that in one hasty, impatient moment of hunger, he had sold, for the transient gratification of a low appetite, what no penitence could undo, and no money re-purchase. And Jacob, feeling himself the cravings of hunger, was chastised for taking an unkind advantage of his brother's necessity ; and ready, in his turn, to perish, might be constrained to adopt the words of Esau, " Behold, I am at the point " to die ; and what profit shall this birth-right do to " me." For although God serves himself of the weakness and the vices of men, he approves them not, neither will he suffer them to pass unpunished.

Isaac, warned of God, removes, not into Egypt, the land which had afforded his father shelter and subsistence in a similar storm, and which has often proved an asylum to the church, but retires to Gerar, one of the cities of Palestine, situated between Kadesh and Shur. Abimelech was the Prince who at that time reigned over the Philistines. The same person, according to Josephus, with whom Abraham had formed a connexion so

friendly, and with whom, for that reason, Heaven now directed Isaac to sojourn, till the famine should be relieved. This conjecture of the Jewish historian, though not altogether insupportable, from a physical impossibility, is highly improbable, if we consider, that seventy-five years have elapsed since Abraham resided at Gerar; and History furnishes few, if any examples, of reigns of so long continuance. It is more probable, that Abimelech was, then, the general appellative name of the princes of that part of Palestine, as Pharaoh was that of the kings of Egypt. When we behold the Patriarchs thus removing from place to place, a feeble, unwarlike, encumbered band, through nations fierce, envious, and violent, their safety is to be accounted for, only from the restraining power of God over the hearts of men. The dreadful judgment of Sodom, where Lot dwelt; the blindness which punished the attempt to violate his guests; and the more tremendous destruction which avenged just Heaven of their ungodly deeds, might operate powerfully, so far as these events were known, and their memory was preserved, to overawe the neighbouring nations, and to procure for Lot's family and kindred the attention and respect which fear, if not love, inspires. And, as a proof of his supremacy, that God, "in whose hand the heart of the king is, and who can turn it which way soever he will," has frequently constrained the enemies of his church and people to be their friends and protectors.

prince, he has now obtained a settlement in the land, and by the blessing of Heaven upon his honest industry, he prospers and increases in the midst of difficulties. "Isaac sowed in the land, and received, in the same year, an hundred fold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew, until he became very great. For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants." But we are not to imagine that worldly success is ever proportioned to promising means, and favourable opportunities. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." Some men's sails seem to gather every breath of the wind: they get forward in spite of every obstacle; others feel the tempest continually blowing in their faces; all things are against them; and though they set out with the fairest, most flattering prospects, they are unaccountably thwarted and disappointed, they "wax poor and fall into decay." Let not prosperity, then, be deemed an infallible proof of wisdom, or of worth, or of divine favour: neither let want of success be always ascribed to folly, or vice, or the curse of Heaven; for in this mixed, imperfect, probationary state, "time and chance happen to all men," neither can a man tell "what is good for him all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow."

Every temporal advantage has a corresponding infelicity. Isaac grew rich and great, but "the Philistines envied him:" and "who can stand before

“envy?” This dark malignant passion prompted his surly, jealous hosts, to cut off one source of his wealth; “for all the wells which his father’s servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.” This was, in effect, to destroy the flocks and the herds, for without water, “the cattle upon a thousand hills,” are a poor perishing commodity. Envy considers that as gained to itself, which is lost to another; and it not only delights in the destruction, from which it hopes to draw some advantage, but it enjoys the mischief which it works merely for mischief’s sake. Envy will even submit to hurt itself a little, to have the malicious satisfaction of hurting another much. Abimelech himself, more liberally minded than meaner men, grows, at length, weary of his guest; he feels himself hurt at his growing prosperity; he envies his greatness, and dismisses him with cold civility: “And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us: for thou art much mightier than we.” Grandeur admits not of friendship; and friendship disdains to dwell with profligacy. Of all the men in a nation, the king is most certainly excluded from this blessing; and surely his lot contains nothing to be once compared with it.

Isaac prudently gives way; withdraws the hated object from before the eyes of envy, and, leaving the city, pitches his tent in the valley of Gerar. Apprehending that he had an hereditary right to the wells of water which were his father’s, and which

the Philistines had maliciously obstructed, he digs again for them, in the valley ; and, from respect to the memory of Abraham, as well as to keep alive the remembrance of the gracious interposition of the Divine Providence in his behalf, he revives the ancient names, by which the wells were distinguished ; particularly Beersheba, or the well of the oath, the memorial of the covenant, ratified upwards of seventy years before, between the king of the Philistines and Abraham ; and which was known by that name, for many ages afterwards, as one of the extreme boundaries of the Holy Land.

But the jealousy of the Philistines pursues him from the city into the field. No sooner has he, by industry, procured for his family that important necessary of life, water, than the herdsmen of Gerar endeavoured, by violence, to possess themselves of it. Isaac, fond of peace, chooses rather to recede from his just right, than to support it by force ; and he still retires, seeking relief in patience and industry. He finds himself still pursued by the pride and selfishness of his neighbours, but, at length, he conquers by yielding ; a victory the most certain, the most honourable, and the most satisfactory ; and the tranquillity and ease of *Rehoboth* [Room] amply compensate the troubles and vexation of *Esek* [Contention] and *Sitnah* [Hatred]. Finally, in order to prevent, as far as in him lay, every ground of quarrel, he fixes his residence at a still greater distance from Abimelech, "He went up from thence to "Beersheba ;" where, feeling himself at home, after

so many removals, he at once pitches his tent for repose, and builds an altar for religion ; and thus, the hatred and violence of man are lost and forgotten in communion with God.

The expression, “ he called upon the name of “ the Lord,” seems to import, that when his altar was built, it was consecrated to the service of God, with certain extraordinary solemnities ; such as sacrifice and public thanksgiving, at which the whole family assisted, and in which the holy man himself, the priest as well as the prince of his family, joyfully presided. His piety was speedily acknowledged, and crowned with the approbation and smiles of his Heavenly Father, for “ the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am “ the God of Abraham thy father : fear not, for I am “ with thee, and will bless thee, and will multiply “ thy seed, for my servant Abraham’s sake.”

His meek and placid deportment, together with his increasing power and wealth, and the favour of Heaven so unequivocally declared, have rendered the Patriarch so dignified and respectable in the eyes of the world, that the Prince, who from an unworthy motive had been induced to treat him with unkindness, and to dismiss him from his capital, now feels himself impelled to court his friendship, and to secure it by a solemn compact. Abimelech considers it as no diminution of his dignity, to leave home, attended with the most honourable of his council, and the supreme in command over his armies, in order to visit the shepherd in his tent. The expostulation

of Isaac (Gen. xxvi. 27.) is simple and natural, and his conduct (ver. 30.) exhibits a mind free from gall, free from resentment. The reply of Abimelech discloses the true motive of this visit; and we are not surprised to find, that fear has, at least, as large a share in it as love (ver. 28, 29). The worst of men find it to be their interest to live on good terms with the wise and the pious; and good men cleave to each other from affection. The covenant being amicably renewed, and the oath of God interposed, and "an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife," the king of Gerar and his retinue return in peace, and leave Isaac to the retirement which he loved, and to that intercourse with Heaven, which he prized infinitely above the friendship of earthly potentates.

And now a delightful calm of eighteen years ensued: of which no traces remain to inform or instruct mankind, but which, from the well known character of this Patriarch, we may well suppose, were spent in such a manner, as to be had in everlasting remembrance before God.

At the expiration of this period, his domestic tranquillity was again cruelly disturbed, and by his favourite son; who, in the fortieth year of his own life, that is, the hundredth of his father's, introduced two idolatrous wives into the holy family. This was two evils in one. It was being unequally yoked with infidelity; and it was carrying on a practice which has ever been, and ever will be, fatal to domestic peace. The daughter of an Hittite would

naturally be disposed to interrupt the religious harmony which prevailed; and two wives at once would as certainly be disposed to annoy each other, and embroil the whole family in their quarrels. Isaac was well acquainted with the solicitude of his pious father on his own account, in the important article, marriage; and was conscious of a similar anxiety, respecting the settlement of his sons. We may easily conceive, then, how he felt on this accumulated irregularity and imprudence of Esau. He was wounded there, where as a man, as a father, and as a servant of the true God, he was most vulnerable. What was it to be neglected, unacknowledged, in a matter of the highest moment to his comfort, by that son whom he had cherished with the fondest affection, and on whom he had rested his fondest hopes! The holy descent was in danger of being marred by an impure heathenish mixture; and the minds of his grand-children likely to be perverted from the knowledge and the worship of the God of their fathers. Such is the return which parents too often meet with, for all that profusion of tenderness and affection which they lavish upon their offspring; for all their wearisome days and sleepless nights. The ingrates dispose of their affections, their persons, their prospects, their all, in a hasty fit of passion; as if the father who brought them up with so much toil and trouble, as if the mother who bare them, had no concern in the matter. The ungrateful, disorderly conduct of their

edler son was "a grief of mind to Isaac and to "Rebekah."

Whether from the vexation occasioned by this event, from disease, from accident, or from some natural weakness in the organ of sight, we are not informed, but we find Isaac, in the one hundred and thirty-fifth year of his life, in a state of total blindness; and he was probably visited with the loss of that precious sense, at a much earlier period; but forty-five years, at least, of his earthly pilgrimage, were passed in this dark and comfortless state. All men wish to live to old age; but when they have attained their wish, they are apt to repine at the infirmities and the discomforts necessarily incident to it. They would be old; but they would not be blind, and palsied, and feeble. They would be old; but they would not be neglected, wearied of, and forsaken. They would be old; but they would not be practised upon and deceived. But old age certainly brings on all these, and many other inconveniencies; and vain it is to dream of the benefit, without the care. We read but of one, Moses himself, whose "eye, at the age of one hundred and "twenty, was not dim, nor his natural force abated."

This dark period of Isaac's life, containing many interesting and instructive particulars, will furnish matter for a separate discourse. In reviewing the past, we are under the necessity of again admonishing parents on that momentous article, impartiality in the distribution of their attention, their tender-

ness, their property, among their children. The trifling circumstances of name, of personal likeness, of beauty and deformity, and the like, over which parents had little power, and the children none at all, and which in themselves have neither merit nor demerit, which are the objects of neither just praise nor blame, have been known to establish distinctions in families, which destroyed their peace, and accelerated their ruin; and children unborn have often felt the dire effects of a silly nick-name, imposed on a progenitor whom they knew not, and whose relation to them was thereby rendered a curse.

Men are often deemed unfortunate, both by themselves and others, where they deserve to be reckoned unwise. They themselves do the mischief, and then wonder how it came about. They spoil their children, and then complain that they are so perverse. I know how difficult it is to bring up youth, to bear an even hand between child and child, to counteract the bias of favour and of affection, to conceal and disguise the strong emotions of the heart; but it is only the more necessary to be prudent, to be vigilant, "to walk circumspectly," to ask "wisdom of God."

LECTURE XXII.

GENESIS XXVII. 1—5.

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son; and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

THERE is a generous principle in human nature, which disposes us to take part with the weakest. We feel an honest indignation at seeing weakness oppressed by might, honesty over-reached by cunning, and unsuspecting goodness played upon by selfishness and knavery. God himself feels the insults offered to the destitute and the helpless; declares himself "the judge of the widow," the protector of the fatherless, the shield of the stranger. He aims his thunder at the head of him who putteth a stumbling block in the way of the blind, and who planteth a snare for the innocent. And though, in the sovereignty of his power, and the depths of his wisdom, He is sometimes pleased to employ the

vices of men to execute his purposes of goodness and mercy, He loves and approves only "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report," and the persons who love and practise them.

It is not the least profitable part of the study of both Providence and Scripture, to trace the conduct of a righteous God, in punishing the offender, though he has subdued the offence into a servant of his own will; in chastening his children by a rod of their own preparing; in hurling the wicked into the pit which themselves have digged; and in bringing backsliders again to himself, by making them to eat the bitter fruit of their own doings. Happy it is for the children of men, if their deviations from the path of rectitude meet their correction in a temporal punishment. But woe to that man, whom justice permits to thrive in his iniquity, and to grow hardened through impunity: whose retribution is deferred till repentance can produce no change. Chastise me, O Father, as severely as thou wilt; let me not fall asleep under my own transgression, and thy sore displeasure; dispose as thou wilt of my body, my estate, my worldly comfort; but let my soul live before thee: let me see my sin, and purge me thoroughly from it.

We are now to see the illustration of these reflections, from history.

The life of Isaac may be divided into three pe-

riods. The first, containing seventy-five years, from his birth to the death of Abraham ; during which, being under parental government, and of a meek, un-
aspiring disposition, his history is blended with, and included in, that of his father. The second, commencing at his father's death, and ending in his one hundred and thirty-seventh year, when it pleased God to visit him with extreme weakness, or total loss, of eye-sight, contains the space of sixty-two years, which may be termed his active period. To this succeeds a heavy period of forty-three years, to the day of his death ; during which we see a poor dark old man, at the disposal of others, moving in a narrow sphere ; " knowledge " and comfort " at " one entrance quite shut out." We behold a man who when " he was young, girded himself, and " walked whither he would ; but now become old, " stretching forth his hands, and another girding " him, and carrying him whither he would not." This portion of his history, accordingly, is blended with, and swallowed up in, that of his sons.

As the beginning of this period, Isaac, sensible of his growing infirmities, feeling the approach of death, though ignorant of the day of it, and anxious to convey the double portion, the patriarchal benediction, and the covenant promise, according to the bent of his natural affection, to his elder and more beloved son ; he calls him with accents of paternal tenderness, and proposes to him the mingled gratification, of pursuing his own favourite amusement, of ministering to his fond father's pleasure,

and of securing for himself the great object of his ambition and desire, the blessing, with all its valuable effects. Behold of what importance it is that our propensities be originally good, seeing indulgence and habit interweave them with our very constitution, till they become a second nature; and age confirms, instead of eradicating them. We find the two great infirmities of Isaac's character predominant to the last, a disposition to gratify his palate with a particular kind of food, and partiality to his son Esau. Time has not yet blunted the edge of appetite; and the eye of the mind, dim as the bodily organ, overlooks the undutifulness which had pierced a father's heart, by unhallowed, inauspicious marriages with the Hittite, and he discerns, in his darling, those qualities only, in which misguided affection had dressed him out: for a strong and lively principle of grace may consist with much natural weakness.

Rebekah, equally attentive to the interest of her younger son, happened to overhear the charge which Isaac gave to Esau, and immediately with the quickness of a female, determined, at all hazards, to carry a favourite point: she builds upon it a project of obtaining, by management and address, what she despaired of bringing about by the direct road of entreaty or persuasion. Unhappy it is for that family, the heads of which entertain opposite views, and pursue separate interests. One tent could not long contain two rival brothers, whose animosity was kept alive and encouraged by those whose wis-

dom and authority should have interposed to suppress it. It is affecting to think how little scrupulous even good people are, about the means of accomplishing what their hearts are set upon: how easily the understanding and the conscience become the dupe of the affections. The apologists of Rebekah charitably ascribe her conduct, on this occasion, to motives of religion. She is supposed to be actuated, throughout, by zeal for supporting the destination of Heaven, "The elder shall serve the younger;" a destination which she observed her husband was eager to subvert. I am not disposed to refuse her, to a certain degree, the credit of so worthy a principle; for the piety of her spirit is unquestionable; but I see too much of the woman, of the mother, of the spirit of this world, in her behaviour, to believe that her motives were wholly pure and spiritual. Religion, true religion, never does evil that good may come.

Admitting that Isaac was to blame in misunderstanding, in forgetting, or in endeavouring to contradict the oracle, which gave the preference to Jacob, surely it belonged to the wife of his youth to have employed other means, in order to undeceive and admonish him. Was the deception which she practised upon his helplessness and distress, the proof which she exhibited of the love, honour, and obedience she owed her lord? Was it consistent with genuine piety to take the work of God out of his hands; as if the wisdom of JEHOVAH needed the aid of human craft and invention? And could

a mother, not only herself deviate into the crooked paths of dissimulation and falsehood, and become a pattern of deceit, but wickedly attempt to decoy, persuade, constrain, her own son, to violate sacred truth? "It is not, and it cannot come to good."

Having planned her scheme, and over-persuaded Jacob to assist in the execution of it, she loses not a moment; and Isaac's favourite dish is ready to be served up, long before the uncertainty of hunting, and the dexterity of Esau, could have procured it. Jacob, arrayed in goodly raiment of his elder brother, disguised to the sense of feeling as much as art could disguise him, and furnished with the savoury meat which his father loved, advances with trembling, doubtful steps, to the old man's apartment. In the conversation that ensued, which is most to be wondered at, the honest, unsuspecting simplicity of the father; or the shameless, undaunted effrontery of the son? But, in thinking of the one, our wonder is mingled with respect and esteem; the other excites resentment and abhorrence. It shows the danger of getting into a wrong train. One fraud must be followed up with another, one injury with another; and simple falsehood, by an easy progress, rises up to perjury. Who is not shocked to hear the son of Isaac interposing the great and dreadful name of the "LORD God of his father," not to confirm truth, but to countenance a wilful and deliberate lie? What earthly good is worth purchasing at such a price? Surely his tongue fal-

tered when it pronounced those solemn, those awful words. The good old man's suspicions were evidently alarmed, whether by the tone of Jacob's voice, or the hesitating manner in which he spoke; and, apprehending he had an infallible method of detection, if a fallacy there were, he appeals from the testimony of his ears to his feeling. But behold craft is too deep for honesty. Rebekah and her son have not contrived their plot so ill, as to fail at this stage of the business; and Isaac is too good himself, to imagine that others could be so wicked. He suffers himself, therefore, to be at length persuaded; and, refreshed with meat and drink, pronounces the blessing, which he had promised. Had he not been blinded when he saw, with favour towards Esau, and with the flavour of his venison, he had not been exposed to this imposition in his helpless state. Could Jacob have trusted God, and waited to be conducted of Providence, he had arrived at his end as certainly, and with less dishonour. But "God is true, though every man be found a liar."

It is worthy of observation, that though Isaac, by the spirit of prophecy which was in him, foresaw and foretold the future fortunes of his family; though he could discern objects at the remotest distance, his natural discernment was so small, and even his prophetic knowledge so partial, that he could not distinguish the one branch of his family from the other; and, impelled by a will more powerful than his own, he involuntarily bestowed do-

minion and precedency where he least intended it. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the *will of man*: but holy men of God spake as they "were moved by the Holy Ghost." Thus Balaam afterwards prophesied, not what he would, but as the Spirit of God constrained him; and thus Caiaphas predicted the death of Christ for the sins of the people, but "this spake he not of himself: but "being high priest that year, he prophesied that "Jesus should die for that nation."

Thus was Isaac deceived; in having Jacob imposed upon him for Esau. Nor was Rebekah less disappointed; for the blessing which she had surreptitiously obtained for her favourite, instead of the immediate benefits expected from it, plunged him into an ocean of distress, exiled him from his country and his father's house, exposed him in his turn to imposition and insult; and but for the care of a superintending Providence, the success which he had earned by the sacrifice of a good conscience, must have defeated and destroyed itself. But "the "counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts "of his heart to all generations." His "decree "may no man reverse." "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," but the wisdom and the righteousness of God can bend the wrath of man to their purpose.

Jacob has hardly departed with his ill-gotten benediction, when Esau arrives in the triumph of success and hope: his heart overflowing with filial

tenderness, and panting for the promised reward of his labours. The feelings of both father and son are more easily conceived than described, when the cheat was discovered: such as the shame of being over-reached, resentment against the impostor, the chagrin of disappointed hope, of disappointed ambition; bitter reflection on the folly and danger of resisting the high will of Heaven, and on the hard necessity of submitting to the irreversible decree. Nothing can exceed the tenderness of Esau's expostulation, when he found that the blessing was irrecoverably gone from him. The name of his brother, the occasion of its being given him; his conduct since he grew up; the repeated advantage which he had taken, of his necessity at one time, of his absence at another, all rush upon his mind at once, and excite a tempest of passion which he is unable to govern. "And Esau said unto his father, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father; bless me, "even me also, O my father! and Esau lift up his "voice and wept." The ability, and the good will, of an earthly parent, have their limits: he has but one, and another, blessing to bestow; what he gives to this child is so much taken away from that other: but the liberality and the power of our Heavenly Father are unbounded: "In our father's house "there are many mansions;" with him "there is "bread enough and to spare." Isaac discovers, at length, that he has been fighting against God; and while he resents Jacob's subtlety, and the unkindness of Rebekah, he acknowledges and submits to

the high will of Heaven. The blessing which he had pronounced unwittingly, and which he finds to be irrevocable, he now deliberately and cheerfully confirms.

And now, behold the little spark of discord between brethren, blown into a flame, which threatens destruction to the whole family; and, dreadful to think! Esau looks forward with desire to the death of his old kind father, that he might prosecute revenge against his brother, even unto blood. Hitherto we have seen in Esau an object of compassion; we now view him with detestation; and we find the righteous judgment of God prosecuting this murderous disposition in his posterity to their utter ruin. “For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.” Obad. v. 10. “As I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. Thus I will make Mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out, and him that returneth.” Ezck. xxxv. 6, 7. “Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.” Amos i. 11, 12. Rebekah, now that “a sword pierces through her own soul,”

—ready “to lose both her children in one day,” too late discerns how imprudently she has acted, and is glad to purchase the safety of her favourite, at the price of his banishment. So uneasily do those possessions sit upon us, which we have acquired improperly.

The threatening words of his elder son must soon have reached the ears of the aged Patriarch also, and he has the inexpressible mortification of learning, that the ungrateful wretch whom he had cherished in his bosom, and to whom his fondness would have given every thing, was enjoying the prospect of his approaching death, because it would afford a safer opportunity of practising his meditated revenge. This, indeed, was the bitterness of death, to “feel how sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is, to have a thankless child.” And thus severely, the unwise attachment of both the parents punished itself by the effects which it produced.

To prevent the dreadful mischief which hung over his hoary head; all his prospects concerning Esau being now blighted by the heathenish alliances which he had formed, by his diabolical character, and by the rejection of Heaven, he gladly consents to the dismissal of Jacob; and all his hopes, at length, settle on him whom he loved less. But, to part with the heir of the promise, at the age of one hundred and forty years; to send him away into a far country, was it not to part with him for ever? The fervour of his farewell benediction pathetically expresses his despair of meeting him:

again, "God Almighty bless thee, and make thee
"fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be
"a multitude of people: and give thee the blessing
"of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee;
"that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou
"art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham."
These are the last words, this is the last action of
Isaac's life, which stand upon record. But his latter
end was at a greater distance than he, or than Esau,
apprehended. He survived this event forty years.
He lived to lose in communion with God, the dis-
order and dispersion of his family; he lived to
shelter, and to bless, by his prayers, him whom the
paternal roof could shelter and protect no longer;
he lived to be refreshed with the good tidings of
the success of the blessing, and of the happy in-
crease of Jacob's family: he lived to "see him"
again "in his touch," and to embrace his grand-
children.

This period of his life is a mere blank to poste-
rity. But if we are ever admitted to read in "the
"book of God's remembrance," O how will these
forty years, of silence and oblivion, arise and shine!
At last, old and full of days, he drops into the
grave; "the days of Isaac were an hundred and
"fourscore years, and Isaac gave up the ghost and
"died, and was gathered unto his people." "Let
"me die the death of the righteous, and let my
"last end be like his!" Time, and a better spirit,
and the death of a father, have happily extinguished

resentment between the brothers; Esau thinks no more of slaying Jacob. They mingle tears, as did Isaac and Ishmael, over their parent's tomb, and their angry passions sleep in the dust with him.

Thus lived, and died, Isaac the son of Abraham, a man of contemplation, of piety, and of peace: a man of few and slight infirmities, of many and eminent virtues: a man whom Providence tried with multiplied and severe afflictions, and whom faith strengthened to bear them with patience and fortitude. His story comes home to the breast and bosom of every man. His excellencies are such as all men may, by due cultivation, acquire; his virtue such as all may imitate. His faults are those to which good men are liable, and which they are the more concerned to avoid, or to amend.

To young men we would hold him up as a pattern of filial tenderness and submission. Isaac possessed in an eminent degree that most amiable quality of ingenuous youth, dutiful respect to the mother who bare him. He cherished her with pious attention while she lived, and sincerely lamented her in death; till duty called him to drop the grateful and affectionate son, in the loving and faithful husband. So long as Abraham lived, Isaac had no will but the will of his father.

The master of a family may learn of him domestic piety and devotion, conjugal fidelity, prudent foresight, persevering industry.

The selfish and contentious are reprov'd by the

example of his moderation, by his patience under unkindness and injustice, by his meek surrender of an undoubted right, for the sake of peace.

Let the aged consider him well, and imitate his sweetness of temper, his resignation under affliction, his gentle requital of deception and insult, his superiority to the world, his composure in the prospect of dissolution, and the faith which triumphed over the grave.

Let the affluent, and the prosperous, learn to adorn high rank and ample fortune by humility and condescension ; and the wretched to endure distress with fortitude and resignation. Let his faults be forgotten, and his infirmities covered ; or remembered only as a proof and admonition to ourselves. And let us be followers together of him, and of all them, who “ through faith and patience inherit the “ promises.”

LECTURE XXIII.

GENESIS XXV. 27—34.

And the boys grew; and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison; but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore his name was called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birth-right. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birth-right do to me? and Jacob said, Swear to me this day: and he swore unto him. And he sold his birth-right unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of Lentiles; and he did eat, and drink, and rose up, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birth-right.

THE importance of the personages, to whose acquaintance we are introduced in the Sacred pages, is to be estimated, not by circumstances which catch and engage the superficial and the vain, and which constitute what is called greatness among men. No, “God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.” When great men are to be sought for, the mind, that is governed

by worldly ideas, rushes straight to the palaces of kings, or enters into the cabinet where statesmen assemble, or attends the footsteps of the warrior over the ensanguined plain. But reason and religion conduct us in far different paths, and present to us far different objects. They discover, many a time, true greatness under the obscure roof of a cottage, or the spreading branches of a great tree ; they exhibit dignity and consequence affixed, not to the royal sceptre, but to the shepherd's crook, and they feelingly teach us, that what is highly prized among men is of little estimation in the sight of God.

The person, on whose history we are now entering, is third, in order and succession, of the illustrious three, who are distinguished in Scripture as the covenant friends of God, and the ensamples of all them who, in after ages, should believe. " I am " the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and " the God of Jacob." Thus it is spoken of the men whom the King of kings delighteth to honour ; and what is rank and title among men, compared to this ?

Jacob was, by the ordinance of Heaven, destined to pre-eminence and superiority, before he was born : and He who could have raised him to the rights of primogeniture, in the ordinary course of nature, was pleased, such is divine Sovereignty, to bestow this advantage upon him, by the concurrence of various providential events ; that men may adore, and submit to the God " who worketh all things according " to the counsel of his own will." The struggle be-

tween the twin brothers began early, and it lasted long. With more than ordinary reasons for loving each other, the ill-judged partialities of parental affection, and the lust of precedency and power, inflame them to uncommon rancour and animosity. The strife, which was at first accidental, or instinctive, becomes at length wilful and deliberate ; and the name of Jacob, imposed in the beginning, from the slight incident of his laying hold with his hand of his brother's heel, comes, in process of time, to be a mark of his character, and a record of his conduct. Events unimportant, incidental, contingent, in the eyes of men, are often matters of deep design, of mighty and lasting consequence, with God. The natural disposition of the two brothers early discovered itself ; Esau betakes himself to the active, dissipated, and laborious sports of the field ; Jacob, formed for social and domestic life, abides at home in the tents, attending to family affairs, cultivating filial affections, and living in the exercise of filial duties. The Chaldee Paraphrast gives a translation of the words of Moses rendered in our version, " dwelling in tents," considerably different in sense, " he was a minister in the house of teaching," understanding, by the word *tents* or *tabernacles*, the place appointed for divine worship.

The first action of Jacob's life, recorded by the Sacred Historian, is by no means calculated to give us a favourable impression of his heart. The young men were now in their twenty-fifth year ; the elder, entirely devoted to his favourite pursuit ; the younger,

ever on the watch to obtain that, by art or industry, which nature had taken from him. It happened on a certain day, that he had employed himself in preparing a plain dish of pottage of lentiles, for his own entertainment. And here, let not the fastidious critic, who measures every thing by modern manners and maxims, consider this as an employment beneath the dignity of Isaac's son. It is, in truth, one of a multitude of instances, of the beautiful simplicity of ancient customs. The greatest heroes, and the proudest princes, whom Homer has exhibited, are frequently found engaged in similar occupations. Esau, returning from the field, and having been either unsuccessful in hunting, or too impatient to delay the gratification of his appetite, till his venison was prepared, entreats his brother for a share of the provision which he had made for himself. Jacob, taking advantage of his brother's hunger and eagerness, proposes as an equivalent for his pottage, no less a price, than the favourite object of all his ambition and desire, the birth-right. Unconscious, or regardless, of its value, and in a haste to satisfy the craving of the moment, he inconsiderately parts with that which nature had given him in vain, which a father's fondness strove to secure for him, but which a conduct so "profane," and precipitate, proved him altogether unworthy of possessing.

But was the conduct of Jacob pure, and praiseworthy, in this transaction? It cannot be affirmed. Providence, indeed, had ordained him to the bless-

ing which he so ardently coveted ; but Providence neither appoints, nor approves of, crooked and indirect paths to the ends which it has proposed. Weak and erring men may, perhaps, not be displeased to have part of their work taken off from their hands, but if we presume to take the whole, or any part, of the work of God upon ourselves, it is both with sin and with danger. “ *His* counsel “ indeed shall stand,” but the offender shall pay the price of his rashness.

It is a dreadful thing to get into a course and habit of acting amiss. When we have got a favourite object in view, behold, how every thing is made to bend to it ! The birth-right, the birth-right, was the darling object of Jacob’s fondest wishes : and, as if the decree and the prediction of Heaven had not been security sufficient for the attainment of it, he seeks to confirm it to himself, by a deed of sale with his brother, and by the interposition of a solemn oath ; and finally, he is eager to have the bargain ratified by the solemn benediction of his Father’s prophetic lips. “ He that believeth shall “ not make haste,” but alas ! I see in Jacob an earnestness to obtain his end, that borders on diffidence and suspicion ; and indeed, whom, or what, can that man trust, who has not confidence in his Maker ?

The scene of imposition and fraud, as forming an essential article of Jacob’s history, rises again to view. I like his taking advantage of his Father’s blindness still less, than his attempt to carry a fa-

vourite point, by taking advantage of his brother's hunger and impetuosity. The latter was but the skill and address of an open adversary ; the former was the cunning and the deceit of a crafty and undutiful child. Observe how cautiously, and how fearfully, and how slowly, the footsteps of the deceitful must proceed. The moment that the conscience swerves from truth and rectitude, the man becomes jealous, and anxious, and timid ; but integrity advances with firmness and intrepidity. " And " Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau " my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth " man. My father peradventure will feel me, and " I shall seem to him as a deceiver, and shall bring " a curse upon me, and not a blessing."

But what could make Rebekah, and her favourite son, so anxious to attain this superiority ? What was there in the birth-right, to make it thus fondly coveted, and thus unremittingly pursued ? The answer to these questions will, at least, plead some excuse for their zeal, if not wholly do away the guilt of their falsehood. First, The gift of prophecy was known to reside in the Patriarch Isaac, and in the parental benediction, and, in certain circumstances, it was considered as having the force of a prediction. Secondly, Pre-eminency and power over the rest of the family, in patriarchal times, were affixed to priority by birth ; thus God speaks to Cain concerning Abel, " Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt " rule over him." Thirdly, A double portion of the paternal inheritance appertained to the first-born ;

and this perhaps explains the meaning of Elisha's request, at the rapture of Elijah, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me:" not as if he meant to ask or expect twice so much as Elijah had, but the share of an elder brother. Fourthly, The honour of priesthood resided then, and for many years after, in the first-born, and was justly considered as the first of privileges. Finally, The promise of the Messiah, "the first-born among many brethren," was entailed upon the eldest son, and this was justly understood to confer a dignity, and a lustre, infinitely superior to all temporal blessings. The guilt of Esau consisted, then, in undervaluing and despising an advantage so distinguished. The offence of Jacob's fraud is greatly extenuated, if not wholly extinguished, in the nobility and worth of the prize for which he contended.

Behold him, then, retired from the presence of his deluded Father, who had prescience sufficient to discern, at the distance of ages, the future fortunes of his family, without sagacity capable of discerning the imposture, which was, at that very instant, practising upon his credulity and want of sight. Behold Jacob retired, in possession indeed of the blessing, but haunted with the terrors which eternally pursue the man who is conscious to himself that he has acted wrong. He has gained the birth-right, but he has lost a brother; he has by subtlety stolen away the prophetic benediction, but he has raised up against himself an implacable foe. No possession

whatever yields that satisfaction which we promised ourselves in it beforehand ; and conscience will not permit us to enjoy peaceably, that which we have acquired unworthily. His father's blessing announced every kind and degree of prosperity, " the dew of heaven," the fatness of the earth, " the servitude of nations and people, lordship over his brethren ;" but he is instantly constrained to become an exile, and a wanderer, from his father's house ; and when he himself comes to make the estimate of his own life, in the close of it, what is the amount ? " Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." His elder brother is declared his inferior, but he has by much the stronger arm of the two. And while he is practising deceit upon his nearest relations in Canaan, Providence is silently preparing the means of requiting him in Padan-aram, in the person of one already a near relation, and about to be much more closely allied to him, in Laban the Syrian, a man much more cunning and selfish, and much less scrupulous than himself. As this is a character which the inspired Painter has delineated with peculiar felicity and skill, it may now be necessary to look back for a few moments, and to observe the first opening of Laban's spirit and temper, as they appear on the face of the Sacred Drama.

Abraham's servant, having arrived in Mesopotamia, in search of a wife for Isaac his young master, providentially conducted, lights on Rebekah

the sister of this Laban, by the well of water. Having briefly unfolded his commission, and made her a present suitable to his master's rank and affluence, she runs home to acquaint her family with the adventure. Laban, instantly attracted by the sight of the gold, and by the account which he had heard of the state in which Abraham's servant travelled, very prudently concludes that such a connexion might be improved to very great advantage. Hence that profusion of civility and kindness to an entire stranger, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house and room for the camels." Did we not afterwards discover him to be grovelling, greedy, and mercenary, this might have passed for the language of kindness and hospitality; but when the whole is taken in connexion, we see a man, from first to last, invariably attached to his own interest, employing his very daughters as mere instruments of commerce, and prizing nothing but as it ministered to his profit.

Of all the passions of our nature, there is none so steady, so uniform, and so consistent as this is. Avarice never tires by exercise, never loses sight of its object; it gathers strength by gratification, grows vigorous by old age, and inflames the heart when the vital fluid can hardly force a passage through it. What a feast to such a spirit, the concluding scene of the marriage treaty for Rebekah! "The servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave

“ also to her brother and to her mother precious things.”

Such was the man, with whom Jacob was now destined to spend a very considerable part of his life, and whose treatment of him; in the eyes of the severest judge, will pass as sufficient punishment, for the little fallacies which he had practised at home.

Behold, then, in the covenant-head and representative of the holy family, “ a Syrian ready to perish,” leaving his father’s house without an attendant, without a guide, without a companion; more forlorn than his grandfather Abraham himself; for the bitterness of *his* exile was alleviated by the company and conversation of his beloved Sarah; whereas the affliction of Jacob’s banishment was grievously increased, by the consciousness that he had brought it upon himself, and by the necessity of enduring its wearisome days and nights, by himself alone. What could have supported a man in such circumstances? A man who was fond of home, a plain man abiding in tents, a man who had fondly flattered himself with the hope of power and tranquillity, who had dreamed of superiority over his brother, but had not attained unto it? One thing only could have rendered his lot supportable, as it then stood. Jacob, after all, was a good man. His conduct was not indeed pure and perfect, but his heart was right with God; he had once and again been mistaken in the means which he had employed,

but he had all along aimed at the noblest and most important end: and, from the chagrin and disappointment which ever attended the plans of his own devising, he had always a sure and a satisfying refuge in the wisdom and mercy of God. In truth, he had not attained the knowledge of true, practical, vital religion, in the house of even his father Isaac in Lahai-roi, but he learns it in silence, and in solitude, in the plains of Luz. It is a good thing for a young man to feel his own weight, "to bear the yoke in his youth." At ease, and in a multitude, we forget God; in retirement and danger, we learn and feel our dependance, and we call to remembrance a long-forgotten Father and Friend.

This is also a proper stage for resting on our way. We will not lead our traveller from home, till we have found for him a place where to lodge. We cannot bear to see him driven from under the protection of the parental wing, till we are secure that he has got another protector and friend, a "friend who sticketh closer than a brother."

Conformity to the plan which we have proposed, and regard to the analogy of Scripture, would now lead us to exhibit the patriarch Jacob, as a type of the Messiah, to whom Patriarchs and Prophets all give witness, and who was especially prefigured by the son of Isaac. But his story is not yet sufficiently advanced, to afford a foundation broad and solid enough, to support a comparison, such as a more extended view of the subject will furnish, and such as might more rationally conduce to the ends

of edification. We deem it of more importance, at this period, to submit to your consideration a few general observations respecting typical representation, and the proper use to be made of it.

First, in order to constitute a proper type, it is by no means necessary, that the person who answers this important purpose should possess perfect moral qualities. Were this requisite, who ever was worthy to represent the Son of God, the holy Jesus, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips?" But as "the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity," though the law gives no countenance to error or infirmity; so Providence at sundry times, and in divers manners, raised up men, to prefigure to their contemporaries an immaculate Saviour, though they were themselves "compassed with infirmity," of like passions with others, and whose faults are but the more conspicuous, from the honourable station and employment to which they were called. It will follow,

Secondly; That the comparison is not to be stated and pursued through every particular incident of the life, and every feature of the personal character of the person typifying. Men of very different character, and in very different situations, typified the Saviour of the world. To suppose every article of their history, condition, and character, to be typical and prophetic, would therefore, in many instances, involve absurdity and contradiction. Samson, David, and many others who might be mentioned, were eminent types of Christ; but then the resemblance

holds only in certain great leading circumstances : the miraculous conception, for example, the Nazaritic sanctity, the invincible strength, the solitary, victorious achievements, the triumphant death, of the former ; the divine appointment and elevation, the royal dignity, the providential success of the latter, in subduing all the church's enemies ; these, and the like, are the typical circumstances ; but to pursue the resemblance throughout, to make every action of Samson's, or of David's life, typical of something correspondent in the Messiah, would lead far beyond absurdity ; it would issue in impiety and blasphemy. -

Thirdly. Scripture, by direct application, or by fair, unstrained analogy, ought, therefore, to lead, to regulate, and to correct all our inquiries of this sort ; we shall else be in danger of rearing a baseless flimsy structure in the clouds, which can afford neither shelter nor rest. When pleasant amusement alone is the subject, invention and fancy may be allowed their full exertion ; but when we aim at religious instruction, we must be contented to take the Spirit of God for our guide. And here, too, men ought to be jealous and watchful over their own spirits ; lest, in endeavouring to establish a favourite system, and to justify or support pre-conceived opinions, they give to their own wild imaginations the solidity and weight of divine truth ; and, departing from the simplicity of the Gospel, presume to stamp the poor trash of their own brain, with the sacred impress of God. It has often, and with too much justice,

been lamented, that many apply to the Bible, for a justification of the opinions which they have already formed, and are determined, at all risks, to maintain, not to receive the information which they need, and to rectify the prejudices under which they labour.

Finally. To determine the nature and propriety of typical representation, it is of importance to enquire, Whether or not the resemblance which we mean to pursue has a tendency to promote some moral, practical, pious purpose. Does it inspire reverence, wonder, gratitude, love to God? Does it produce a sense of dependance upon, and trust in him? Does it engage us to study, to search, to love the Scriptures? Does it impress on the heart a sense of our own weakness, ignorance, and guilt, and of the deference, respect, and good will which we owe to others? Or is it made a ministering servant to vanity and self-conceit? Leads it our attention from practice to speculation, to theory from real life? Does it place the essentials of religion in modes of opinion, and forms of worship; and, neglecting the heart, content itself with playing about, and tickling the imagination? The answer to these questions will decide the point. By its fruit, the tree is known.

Should all, or any of these remarks seem to bear hard on some of the comparisons which we have endeavoured to establish, we are disposed cheerfully to relinquish the most favourite analogy, rather than seem in the slightest degree to misrepresent, disguise, or pervert the truth. We mean not to wrest Scrip-

ture to our purpose, but would make our purpose, with reverence, bend to that sacred authority. We would not, with sacrilegious hands, force out of the Bible, by violence and art, a scanty and unnatural crop ; but by diligent cultivation, and assiduous care, draw from it a plenteous harvest of what the soil naturally produces. And we now return from this digression to pursue the history of Jacob.

LECTURE XXIV.

GENESIS XXVIII. 5—10.

And Isaac sent away Jacob : and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother. And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went towards Haran.

AT what stage, or in what condition of human life, can a man say, Now my heart is at rest, now my wishes are accomplished, now my happiness is complete? By what unaccountably untoward circumstances is the comfort of the worthiest, the best ordered, the most prosperous families, oft times marred and destroyed! Not through vice only do we suffer; but up to some act of imprudence or inadvertency; up to some trifling infirmity in our nature, or some petty fault in our conduct, our greatest calamities may frequently and easily be traced. One man has made his fortune as it is called; but he has impaired his health in the acquisition of it, or what is still worse, has made shipwreck of a good conscience. Another inherits a fine estate; but goes childless. There we behold a numerous and promising family of children; but the wretched parents have hardly bread to give them: and here both progeny and plenty; but hatred, and jealousy, and strife, banish tranquillity and ease. The heart of one

child is corrupted through indulgence ; the spirit of another is broken by severity.

Isaac is wealthy, but his eyes are dim, that he cannot see. God has given him two sons at once, but they are the torment of his life. He is fondly partial to Esau ; and Esau does every thing in his power, to mortify and disoblige his kind and indulgent father. He is unwittingly drawn in to bless Jacob, and, the very next breath, he feels himself constrained to pronounce sentence of dismissal and banishment upon him. “ The whole ordering of the “ lot is of the Lord,” but “ men themselves cast it “ into the lap.” Providence only brings that out, which, with our own hands, we first put in. Jacob has, by skill and address, forced himself into the birthright, and, by subtlety, insinuated himself into the blessing. And how do they sit upon him ? Very uneasily indeed. His father’s house is no longer a home for him. Grasping at more than his right, he loses what he already had ; eagerly hastening to preferment, without waiting for Providence, he puts himself just so much farther back : and, aiming at rule and pre-eminence in his father’s family, he finds servitude and severity in the house of a stranger. If men will carve for themselves, they must not charge the consequences of their rashness and presumption upon God.

Behold him, then, on his way, pensive and solitary, without so much as a favourite, faithful dog, to accompany and to cheer his wanderings. His whole inheritance is the staff in his hand. Now for

the first time he knows the heart of a stranger ; he feels the bitter change from affluence to want, from society to solitude, from security and protection, to anxiety and danger. More forlorn than Adam expelled from Paradise, or than Abraham called from his father's house, he has no gentle mate to participate, and to soothe his anxieties and cares.

The Scripture assigns no reason why Isaac's heir, and Rebekah's favourite son, the hope of a powerful and wealthy family, was dismissed with such slender provision, wholly unattended, and unprotected too, upon a journey, according to the best calculations, of about one hundred and fifty leagues, or four hundred and fifty miles, through a country, in many places desert and savage, and in others no less dangerous from the hostile tribes which inhabited in it, and ranged through it. But the reason, though not directly assigned, is plainly hinted at in the sixth verse of this chapter, which informs us that Esau knew of this journey, as well as of the cause and intention of it. Jacob, therefore, may be supposed to have stolen away secretly, and without any retinue, and to have shunned the beaten and frequented path to Padan-aram in order to elude the vigilance and resentment of his brother, who, he had reason to apprehend, would pursue him to take away his life. And besides this, we may justly consider both the errand on which he was sent, namely to take a wife from an allied and pious family, in order to propagate a holy and chosen seed; and the homely, solitary style of his travelling, as a very illustrious instance of his faith in God, and of obe-

dience to the divine will; and this, not in Jacob himself only, but in his parents also, who could thus trust the sole prop of their hopes, and of the promise, to dangers so great, and distresses so certain, with no security but what arose from the truth, mercy, and faithfulness of God.

The uneasy reflections arising from solitude, and a gradual removal from the scenes of his youthful and happy days, must have been greatly embittered to him by the consciousness of having brought all this anguish upon himself; by the keenness of disappointment, in the very moment when the spirits were wound up to their highest tone, through success; and by total darkness and uncertainty, with respect to his future fortunes. However, the cheerfulness of light, the pleasing change and variety of natural objects, as he journeyed on, the ardour and confidence of youthful blood and spirits, carry him, with intrepidity and delight, through the day. But ah! what is to become of him now that the sun declines, and the shadows of the evening begin to lengthen? Overtaken at once by hunger, and fatigue, and darkness, and apprehension, where shall he seek shelter, how find repose? Happily, calamity strengthens the soul which it is unable to subdue. The mind, forced back upon itself, finds in itself resources which it knew not of before, and the man who has learned to seek relief in religion, knows where to fly in every time of need. The strong hand of necessity is upon our Patriarch: submit he must, and therefore he submits with alacrity.

And now, behold the heir of Abrahah and of

Isaac, without a place where to lay his head ; that head, which maternal tenderness had taken pleasure to pillow so softly, and to watch so affectionately. " He lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there " all night, because the sun was set : and he took of " the stones of that place, and he put them for his " pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep."

——" Sweet are the uses of adversity ;

" Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,

" Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

SHAKESPEARE.

Jacob, removed from his earthly parents, is but the nearer to his Heavenly Father : a stranger in the waste howling wilderness, he is at home with God : cares perplex his waking thoughts, but angels, in bands, lull his perturbed breast to rest ; they guard, and instruct, and bless his slumbering moments. Who does not pity Jacob, while the evening shades gather, and close, around his head ? Who does not envy his felicity, when the morning light appears, and with it, the recollection of a night passed in communion with God ? Jacob sleeps, but his heart wakes. What had been most upon his mind through the day, continues to occupy and to impress his thoughts after his eyes are closed. Wonderful, awful, pleasing power of God ! which, in the city and in the field, at home and abroad, awake and asleep, moves, directs, governs our bodies and our souls as it wills. What lofty heights is the spirit of man capable of attaining ! What wonders of nature and of grace is the great God capable

“in Christ Jesus hath abounded towards us in all
“wisdom and prudence,” and who, “in bringing
“many sons unto glory, hath made the Captain of
“their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

And who are they that ascend and descend along this mysterious scale? “He maketh his angels
“spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” “Are
“they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to mi-
“nister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation?”

If what by Jacob was *seen* in vision, at Bethel, be worthy of our attention, no less memorable and important are the things which *he heard*. It was much to hear a repetition of the covenant of God with Abraham and Isaac, his fathers, ratified and confirmed to himself. It was much to hear the blessing, lately pronounced over him by the prophetic lips of his earthly parent, conveyed to his ear by a voice infinitely more sacred. It was much to hear that the land which he then occupied with his weary limbs, as a wayfaring man, who continueth but for a night, should afterwards be given to him and to his seed for a possession. It was much to hear from the mouth of God himself, the blessed assurance of protection through his journey, success in his undertaking, and a safe return to his native home. It was much to hear of a posterity, innumerable as the sand upon the sea shore, and spreading to the four winds of Heaven. But the essence of all these promises, the joy of all this joy, was to hear the renewed, the reiterated promise, of a seed descend-

ing from him, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. What could Jacob ask, what had God to bestow, more than this?

Here then the vision ends, and Jacob awakes. After the obvious, natural, and we trust Scriptural view we have attempted to give you of the subject, we shall not abuse your patience so far, as to trespass upon it by going into a detail of the wild, waking dreams of Paraphrasts and Rabbins, and pretended interpreters, on this passage of the Sacred History. It is of more importance to attend to our Patriarch, restored, with the morning light, to the perfect use of his rational faculties, and making use of the admonitions and consolations of the night season, as a help to piety, and as a stimulus to duty, through the day. There was something so singular, both in the subject, and external circumstances of his dream, that he immediately concluded, and justly, that it was from Heaven. And is it not strange, that he who felt no horror at the thought of laying himself down to sleep, in a desert place, under the cloud of night, and alone, should be filled with a holy dread, when morning arose, at the thought of being surrounded with God. “And he
“was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place!
“This is none other but the house of God; and this
“is the gate of Heaven.” And if the visits of the Almighty, as a father and a friend, be thus awful even to good men, what must be the visitations of his wrath to the ungodly and the sinner?

Jacob arises immediately, and erects a monument, of such simple materials as the place afforded, to the memory of this heavenly vision, which he was desirous thus to impress for ever on his heart. The difference of the expression, in the eleventh verse, “he took of the *stones* of the place, and put them “for his pillows,” and in the eighteenth, “he took “the *stone* that he had put for his pillows, and set “it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of “it,” has given occasion to one of the Jewish Rabbins, to attempt a reconciliation of the different expressions, by a fiction of his own brain. Jacob, he says, having chosen out just three *stones* over night, to support his head, found them all joined into one the next morning: which he pretends to allege, was a signification of the strict and solid union which subsisted between God and Jacob. And some later interpreters, though aided by the superior light of the Gospel dispensation, have been simple enough to adopt this fable, and to explain it, some, of the ineffable union of the three persons who are the object of our worship; others, of the conjunction of the soul, body, and deity in the person of Jesus Christ.

It appears, that Jacob intended simply to record, in such characters as his situation afforded, that night's important transaction. He sets up the stone or stones upon which his head had reposed, when visited with the visions of the Almighty, in the form of a rustic pillar, and solemnly anoints, and thereby consecrates it, to the honour of God, by

the name of Bethel, that is, "the house of God;" and over it, thus dedicated, he afresh, and voluntarily, enters into covenant with God, obliging himself by a solemn vow to acknowledge and worship none but him; committing himself, with filial confidence, to the protection of his gracious Providence; trusting the time and manner of his return to the care of infinite wisdom; promising ever to consider this monumental pillar as an altar sacred to the service of God; and binding himself, by an explicit declaration, to devote the tenth part of whatever he should, through the divine blessing, acquire, to pious uses. By the way, the oil wherewith he consecrated his pillar was undoubtedly part of the slender provision which he had made for his journey; and, indeed, a little bread and oil was all he could possibly carry with him; but of that little he cheerfully spares a portion for the purposes of religion: for a truly pious soul must possess little indeed, if it bestow nothing, when charity, mercy, or devotion give the call.

With what cheerfulness does he now prosecute his journey? What a change of condition is produced in one short night! When "the heart is established by grace," difficult things become easy, "the valley is exalted, and the hill laid low, the crooked becomes straight, and the rough places plain." Nothing that the Sacred Historian deemed worthy of recording, occurred, during the remainder of this pilgrimage. Jacob, at length, arrived in the land

of the people of the East ; and now, no doubt, he flatters himself that all his troubles and mortifications are at an end. His grandfather's servant, Eleazer, had been happy enough to finish a marriage treaty for his master's son in a few hours' conversation ; surely then the heir of the same family may be equally successful when making personal application for himself. Ah, blind to futurity ! strange, unaccountable difference, in the divine conduct towards different persons ! Jacob must earn that by long fourteen years' servitude, which Abraham's servant was so successful as to accomplish in the pronouncing of almost as many words.

But here we must make another pause, and leave the next scene of Jacob's life, and the sequel of it, to another Lecture ; but we must no longer defer the beginning, at least, of that parallel, which is one object among others, if not the chief, in these exercises.

Jacob is destined of Providence to power and precedency before he was born. Jesus is declared the Son of God, and the heir of all things, by the angel who announced his miraculous conception and birth to his Virgin Mother. Jacob, the last in order of nature, but first in the election of grace, prefigures Him, who, appearing at the end of the world, is nevertheless " the first-born among many brethren." Jacob, hated and persecuted of his brother, is an obvious type of Him who was to come, " despised and rejected of men ;" crucified

and slain by the impious and unnatural hands of those who were his bone and his flesh. Jacob, dismissed with blessings by his father from Beersheba, points out to us Jesus leaving Heaven's glory, and the bosom of the Father, in compliance with the eternal decree, to become a wanderer in our world ; " a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The object of Jacob's journey and of Christ's is one and the same. Jacob to procure for himself a believing spouse, to become the fruitful mother of an elect offspring ; Jesus to purchase for himself, at the price of his own blood, " the church, which is his " body, to espouse it to himself as a chaste bride," united to him in everlasting bands of interest and affection. Jacob, deserted and solitary in the plain of Bethel, is a shadow of Christ forsaken of all in the wilderness of this world, yet not " alone, but " his Heavenly Father always with him." The vision of the ladder has already spoken for itself. What, then, remains but to add, Jacob's covenant, consecration, and vow, are so many different representations of Christ's covenant of redemption ; his unction by the Spirit to the execution of his high office ; and not the tithe, but the whole, of his vast and glorious acquisition rendered unto God even the Father : when the kingdom is finally delivered up to him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, " that God may be all in all." I add no more, but my most fervent prayers to Almighty God, that by night and by day, alone and in society, when you sleep and when you wake, in pros-

perity and in adversity, you may be still with God ; and that “ the Almighty may be your refuge, “ the Most High your habitation,” and “ under- “neath and around you the everlasting arms.” Amen.

LECTURE XXV.

GENESIS XXIX. 20.

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

THE great Author of our nature has wisely and wonderfully adapted the various objects which successively solicit our attention, and which engage our pursuit, to the different periods of our life, the different and successive affections of our heart, the different stations which we have to occupy, and the duties which we are bound to perform. Human life, in so far as nature predominates over it, does not consist of violent and sudden transitions, but of calm, gentle, imperceptible changes: like the gradual progress of the day, from the morning dawn to meridian splendour; and thence gradually back again, to the glimmering twilight of the evening, and the shades of night. We emerge not at once from infancy into manhood; we sink not in a moment from manhood into old age. We grow, and we decline, without perceiving any alteration. Betwixt the giddiness and inconsideration of childhood, and the serious cares and employments of mature age, there is a middle, and an important stage of life, which connects the two; and there is a passion happily

adapted to it, which contains and unites the spirit of both ; a passion which blends the vivacity and impetuosity of the boy, with the gravity and thoughtfulness of the man ; that noble and generous passion, which the great God has implanted in our nature, to attract, unite, and bless mankind ; and which, therefore, the pen of inspiration has not disdained, in its own inimitable manner, to delineate. It was this passion, which speedily compensated to Jacob the loss of his father's house, and the pains of a tedious journey ; which sweetened and shortened seven long years of hard and mortifying servitude ; but which, at the same time, anticipated both the cares and the delights of future life.

Jacob, cheered and supported by the recollection of his vision at Bethel, and animated with the hope of a happy meeting with his friends and relations at Padan-aram, goes on his way, rejoicing ; and guided, protected, and sustained by an indulgent Providence, he arrives in safety. It was that simple, innocent, and happy age of the world, when the chief occupations and enjoyments of human nature were seen in the shepherd's life ; while as yet gold had not settled the price of every other production of the natural world, nor determined the importance of all intellectual endowments ; while as yet commerce had not opened her ten thousand channels of luxury, to enervate, corrupt, and destroy mankind. His conversation, with the shepherds of Haran, must always afford exquisite delight to those, whose taste, undebauched by the frippery of modern man-

ners, and the affectation of ceremony and compliment, can relish the honest simplicity of nature, and the genuine expression of unaffected, unsophisticated kindness and benevolence. From them he has the pleasure of hearing that his kinsman Laban lived in the neighbourhood, and was in health; and that his daughter Rachel was every moment expected to come to the watering place, with her father's flock. While they are yet speaking, Rachel, beautiful as the opening spring, and innocent as the lambs which she tended, draws nigh with her fleecy charge. With what admirable propriety and skill, do the Holy Scriptures represent the most distinguished, exalted, and amiable female characters, engaged in virtuous, humble, useful employments! Sarah, baking cakes upon the hearth, for the entertainment of her husband's guests; Rebekah, drawing water for the daily use of her brother's family, and for the refreshment of the weary traveller; and Rachel, feeding her father's sheep. O that ye knew, young female friends, wherein your true dignity, value, and importance consisted! Even in being, what God from the beginning intended you to be, "an help meet for man;" not the mere instrument of his pleasure, nor the silly idol of his adoration.

Jacob, with the ardor natural to a manly spirit, and the zeal of an affectionate relation, runs up to salute, and to assist his fair kinswomen. Little offices of civility are the natural expression of a good and honest heart; they often suggest the first sentiments of love, both to those who confer, and to those who

receive them ; and they keep love alive after it is kindled. The meeting of that day, and Jacob's natural, easy, officious gallantry, in relieving Rachel, on their very first rencounter, of the heaviest part of her pastoral task, inspired, no doubt, emotions very different from those which the mere force of blood produces ; and were recollected by both, with inexpressible satisfaction, many a time afterward. And little do we know of the female heart, if it would not much rather be wooed with the attentions and assiduities of an agreeable man, than by the prudent and disgusting formalities of settlements, and deeds, and reversions. Rebekah was courted by proxy, with presents and promises ; Rachel is addressed by her destined husband in person, with the looks, and the language, and the service of love. Betwixt the union of Isaac and Rebekah, that match of interest and prudence, no obstacle, except the trifling distance of place, interposed ; but many difficulties occurred to retard, to prevent, and to mar the union of Jacob and Rachel, founded in esteem, and prompted by affection. They become insensibly attached to each other. For love does not give the first warning of his approach, to the parties themselves. But it did not long escape the penetrating, selfish eye of the crafty father and uncle ; who, from the moment he observes this growing passion in his nephew and daughter, casts about how best to convert it to his own advantage.

Jacob had frankly told him the whole of his situation, and laid open to him all his heart ; that

he had, indeed, purchased the birth-right, and obtained the prophetic blessing, but that, through fear of his brother, he had been constrained to flee from home, and to seek protection in Syria. This was by no means a situation likely to engage the attention, and to procure the kindness, of a worldly mind. An empty, nominal birth-right, and a blessing which promised only distant wealth, were very slender possessions in the eyes of covetous Laban. He could not help comparing the splendid retinue of Eleazer, seeking a wife for his master's son, with the simple appearance of Jacob, come a courting to his family, with only his staff in his hand; and he finds it greatly to the disadvantage of the latter. But it is the interest of avarice to put on, at least, the appearance of that justice which it secretly dreads and hates, if not of that generosity which it despises. Jacob had, unsolicited, and without a stipulation, hitherto rendered Laban his best services for nothing: indeed he was thinking of but one object in the world; namely, how to render himself agreeable to his amiable cousin. When, therefore, Laban, who must clearly have foreseen the answer, under an affected regard to the interest of his relation, inquires into, and proposes the condition of his future services, Jacob without hesitation proposes marriage with his younger daughter. And having no marriage portion to give the father, as the custom of the times and of the country required, he offers, as an equivalent, seven years' personal servitude and labour. What is loss of ease,

loss of liberty, loss of life, to love? When I behold Jacob, at such a price, ready and happy to purchase the object of his affection, whether shall I pity or condemn the cold, timid, selfish hearts of the young men of the present generation, who persist in the neglect of nature's clearest, plainest law, from I know not what pretended reasons of caution and wisdom, which would fain pass for virtue, but are in reality the offspring of pride and luxury, pusillanimity and self-love.

The proposal is no sooner made than accepted, and Laban has the satisfaction of at once betrothing his daughter to wear Isaac's son and heir, and of securing for himself the present emolument of Jacob's labour, care, and fidelity, for seven good years. Thus, the rights of humanity, the laws of hospitality, and the ties of blood, are all made basely to truckle to the most sordid and detestable of all human passions; and the free-born grandson of Abraham sinks into abject servitude, the worst of all servitude, subjection to a near relation.

But as every blessing of life has its corresponding inconvenience, so every evil has its antidote; Jacob is contented and happy, while his pains and fatigue are alleviated by the conversation of his beloved Rachel; and what is it to him, that the stern, discontented father frowns and chides, so long as the beautiful daughter receives him with complacency and smiles. He bears with patience and cheerfulness the ardour of the meridian sun, and the cold chilling damps of the evening, in the hopes of that

blest hour, when tender sympathy shall soothe his distresses, and every uneasiness be lulled to rest in the bosom of love. In this sweet commerce, the years of slavery glide imperceptibly away, and what absence would have rendered insupportably long, the presence of the beloved object has shortened into the appearance of a few days. Such is the inconceivable charm of virtuous love. “Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.”

Jacob having faithfully fulfilled his part of the covenant, now calls on Laban to fulfil what was incumbent upon him. The better to conceal the fraud which he was meditating, he feigns compliance; and unsuspecting Jacob is amused with all the usual apparatus of a marriage feast. According to the custom of those eastern nations, the bride was conducted to the bed of her husband, with silence, in darkness, and covered from head to foot with a veil; circumstances, all of them, favourable to the wicked, selfish plan which Laban had formed, to detain his son-in-law longer in his service. Leah is accordingly substituted in room of her sister. And he, who, by subtlety and falsehood, stole away the blessing intended for his brother, is punished for his deceit, by finding a Leah where he expected a Rachel. He who employed undue advantage to arrive at the right of the first-born, has undue advantage taken of him, in having the first-born put in the place of the younger. He who could practise upon

a father's blindness, though to obtain a laudable end, is, in his turn, practised upon by a father, employing the cover of night to accomplish a very unwarrantable purpose. Laban was base, treacherous, and wicked; but Heaven is wise, and holy, and just. Let the man who dares to think of doing evil, in the hope that good may come, look at Jacob and tremble. The shame, vexation, and distress of such a disappointment, are more easily imagined than described. And what are all the votaries of sinful pleasure preparing for themselves? They are treasuring up shame and sorrow, when the delirium of passion is over, and the returning light of reason awakens them to reflection and remorse: they thought it "to be Rachel, but in the morning, behold it was Leah."

The next day, as may well be supposed, exhibited a scene of no pleasing kind: expostulation, upbraiding, and reproach. Laban, as avarice seldom chooses to avow its real motives, endeavours to justify his treachery and breach of faith, by a pretended regard for the laws and manners of his country, which permitted not the younger to be given in marriage before the first-born. An honest man would have given this information when the bargain was first proposed; it was an insult, not an indemnification, to produce it now. What will not this base passion make a man do? To deceive the unsuspecting and unwary; to oppress the weak; to practise upon the stranger, are among its simpler and more customary operations. Behold it leading

a father to ——— by what name shall I call it?— prostitute his own daughter. If there be a crime blacker than another ; if Satan ! there be a purpose thou wouldest accomplish, which modesty shudders to think of, which the hand trembles to perpetrate, from which the conscience in horror recoils ; infuse into some dark heart the dæmon of covetousness, the love of money : place gain in one eye ; prostitution and parricide in the other,—and the work of hell is done.

Mark how easy and flexible the conscience of a miser is. Let interest blow the gale, from whatever quarter it be, and lo, with the rapidity of thought, the understanding and conscience of the covetous wretch are veered round with it. The man who last night shuddered at the thought of violating a foolish and absurd fashion of the country, is not ashamed, the very next morning, to propose polygamy and incest ; and to make his own children the instruments of them. Whence this strange inconsistency ? It was for his advantage to adhere to the custom of the country, and to dispense with the laws of God and nature. What does it concern him that disorder and distress are introduced into his daughter's family, so long as it can any how redound to his private benefit ? If another have any thing like a weak side, avarice is quick-sighted as the eagle to discern it, and not more penetrating to discover, than dexterous to convert it to its own advantage.

Unfortunately Jacob's infirmity was clear as the sun at noon. His unextinguished, unabated passion

for Rachel was well known to her rapacious father; who had, with a joy which the worldly mind alone can feel, seen his flocks multiply, and his wealth increase under Jacob's care. Unsatisfied and insatiable, he builds upon this well-known attachment the project of a farther continuation of Jacob's servitude, with all its accumulation of riches and consequence. The proposal which avarice made without a blush, love accepted with perhaps too much precipitation. We are not framing an apology for Jacob's conduct, but delivering the features of his character, and the lines of his history, from the Sacred Record. But this much we may venture to affirm, that Jacob, left to himself, and to the honest workings of a heart inspired by the love of an estimable object, would never have thought of a plurality of wives; much less of assuming the sister of his beloved Rachel, to be her rival in his affections. It does not appear, that the solemnization of Jacob's marriage with Rachel was deferred till the expiration of the second term of seven years. Provided Laban got sufficient security for performance of the agreement, it was indifferent to him, when his son-in-law got possession of the bride. It is probable, therefore, that he gave way immediately to Jacob's wishes; and the more so, that his business was likely to be executed with greater fidelity and zeal, by a servant and son gratified, indulged, and obliged, than by one soured by disappointment, dissatisfied and irritated by unkindness and deceit. Behold then Jacob, at length, at the sum-

mit of his hopes and desires. After much delay, through many difficulties, which have strengthened, not extinguished affection, Rachel is at last his wife.

But alas, human life admits not of perfect bliss! The seeds of jealousy and strife are already sown in Jacob's family. The wife who enjoyed the largest share of the husband's affection is doomed to sterility; the less beloved is blessed with children. Thus, a wise and gracious Providence, by setting one thing against another, preserves the prosperous from pride and insolence, and the wretched from despair. Twenty years did Isaac and Rebekah live in wedlock without a child, though the inheritance and succession of all Abraham's wealth and prospects depended upon it; whereas the family of Jacob, a simple shepherd, earning his subsistence by the sweat of his brow, the servant of another man, is built up, and increases apace. The good things of life seem, to the superficial and discontented, to be unequally divided; but there is no balance so exact as that in which all conditions and all events are weighed. The great Governor of the world does not indeed conform himself, in the dispensations of his Providence, to the misconceptions and prejudices of short-sighted erring men; but he is affording ignorant erring men, if they will but be attentive, perpetual cause to adore and to admire his wisdom and justice, his mercy and faithfulness. Leah bears to Jacob, as fast as the course of nature permitted, four sons one after another; and, what is remarkable,

not only is the hated wife first honoured with being a mother, but with being the mother of the two tribes who were destined to the priesthood, and to royal dignity; nay the mother, remotely, of the chosen seed; a dignity to which every mother, since the first dawning of the promise, aspired.

The fruitfulness of her sister violently excites Rachel's envy. The partiality of Jacob to her, and all his profusion of tenderness avail her nothing. She is unable to suppress her chagrin and mortification: and, in the bitterness of her heart, forgets both the respect which she owed to her husband, and the submission which she ought to have paid to the will of God. "And she said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die." How odious, how pitiable are the sentiments, the looks, and the language of passion, to the calm and dispassionate; nay to the person himself, when the fit is over, and passion has spent itself? "And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" What! and can the anger of Jacob be kindled against his Rachel, his first, his only love; to obtain whom he had cheerfully served fourteen years? My female hearers, presume not too far on the fondness of the men who love you. Be calm, be moderate, be unassuming, be reasonable, and be every thing. Be arrogant, impetuous, self-sufficient, imperious, unreasonable; and ye sink into nothing. I tremble to think of the dreadful lengths to which a woman will go, to gratify her own spleen,

and to mortify a rival. In truth she ceases to be a female, where certain feminine points are to be carried; and the leading, distinguishing characteristics of the sex are lost and sunk in the feelings of the individual. What! the jealous, envious Rachel, who found her beloved husband had already one wife too many, to think of throwing another into his bosom! But her too happy sister and rival is to be mortified; and she cares not what pangs it may cost her own heart. O my friends, you are yourselves the framers of your own fortunes. Be yourselves, and you may depend on the other sex. But if you quit the ground on which God and nature have placed woman, you are indeed to be pitied. If one might venture to hazard an opinion, not altogether unwarranted by the History, and which I am convinced to be well founded—You much oftener lose your object by eagerness, than by inattention. You may now and then succeed by address, or vehemence, or force; but you will succeed more certainly, and much more pleasantly, with God and with man, by meekness, and gentleness, and submission.

Thus was Jacob most grievously wounded there, where he was most vulnerable; most violently disturbed there, where he promised himself perfect repose. Thus our heaviest crosses arise out of our dearest comforts; and the pursuits of “vanity,” issue in “vexation of spirit.” Thus all things conspire to give full assurance to the children of

men, "that this is not their rest;" and all things invite them to seek "another country, that is an "heavenly," where "there shall be no more death, "neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain," and "God "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

LECTURE XXVI.

GENESIS XXX. 25—30.

And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go; for thou knowest my service which I have done thee. And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry; for I have learned by experience, that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake. And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it. And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming: and now, when shall I provide for mine own house also?

THERE is no subject of contemplation more pleasing, more instructive, more composing to the mind, than the wisdom and goodness of the divine Providence, in adapting and adjusting, with such consummate skill, the understanding, the dispositions, and the exertions of men, to their various and successive situations, relations, employments, and fortunes. What so feeble, so helpless, so necessitous as a new-born infant? But its proper aliment has accompanied it into the world; its first cry has awakened ten thousand fond affections in

one, who at the hazard of her life brought it forth, and at the hazard of her life is ready to preserve it. What so giddy, rash, inconsiderate, as youth? but the father is proportionably thoughtful, serious, and attentive. Man, of all animals, stands longest in need of support and protection, therefore natural affection in man is more intelligent, and of greater duration than in any other creature. Instinct and reason unite their force in aid of the lengthened infancy and childhood of the human race. Parents often, and perhaps unjustly, complain, that their care and tenderness meet not with reciprocal returns of attachment and affection from their children; not considering that this current sets continually downward; and that the love which we bear to our offspring, nature has intended they should repay, not to us, but to *their* offspring. Do our children grieve and vex us with their levity, and thoughtlessness, and folly? Let us have a little patience: by and by, they will become fathers and mothers; and then will they be cured of what now gives us so much uneasiness; and then will they be grieved, vexed, and mortified in their turn.

The anxieties which Jacob's dissension with his brother occasioned to their fond parents, are now thickening upon his own head. In the immediately preceding period of his life, we saw the honest shepherd following his simple employment with cheerfulness and joy; drinking delicious draughts of love from the approving eyes of his amiable shepherdess; and beguiling the tedious months of servitude in

converse with his Rachel, and with the prospect of that bright hour which was to crown his hopes, and to reward all his toil. But these soft moments have passed away and vanished like a dream ; their flight was not perceived ; their value is understood and prized, but not till after they are gone. The cares, and troubles, and apprehensions of a father now occupy his mind ; jealousy and strife disturb his repose.

To what purpose multiply elaborate arguments against the practice of polygamy ? Look into the wretched disorder and discord of those families which have been built upon that unnatural system, and be assured that it is not from Him who loves the children of men, and all whose institutions aim at making them happy. The rival sisters, rather than not mortify each other, voluntarily mortify and degrade themselves, by raising their handmaids to a participation of their husband's bed. Envy and revenge, if they can but hurt an adversary, regard not the wounds which they inflict at home. Unhappy Jacob ! What heart but bleeds for him ? His time, and labour, and strength at the disposal of a selfish, hard-hearted, insatiable father-in-law ; his very person and affections insolently settled, disposed of, and transferred, at the pleasure of two jealous, wrangling sisters ; a family rising and increasing upon him, without the power or means of making any provision for it ! the mind of his beloved Rachel, whom he had earned at the hard price of fourteen years' painful service, soured and chagrined by the want

of one blessing ; the labours of the field through the day not relieved at night by the tenderness of sympathy and love, but embittered and aggravated by womanish altercation and strife. What could have supported him but religion.

Leah has, at various intervals, borne Jacob six sons and a daughter, and Rachel's grief and despair are at their height, when God, whose counsels move not nor stand still, in complaisance to our desires or caprices, thinks meet to remove her sorrow and her reproach ; and she becomes the joyful mother of a son. What ingenious pains the silly mothers take, to perpetuate the memory of their jealous sentiments and contentions, in the names which they impose upon their children ; impiously presuming to drag in Providence as a party to their quarrel ; foolishly and wickedly transmitting their contemptible hatred and animosity to the disturbance and distress of their posterity, and madly sowing the seeds of a plague which might one day break out and consume them ! O how different the jealous spirit which at first dictated the names of the twelve heads of the tribes of Israel, from that prophetic Spirit which foresaw and predicted, their future characters and situations, as it breathed from the lips of their dying father ; and how different from the mind of God, who was thus employing female spleen and passion to declare his own purposes and designs.

About the time of Joseph's birth, it would appear, the term of Jacob's servitude had expired. He now, therefore, naturally thinks of the home which he

had left so long before, and of the obligations which he lay under to exert himself for the maintenance and provision of his numerous family. He, accordingly, modestly applies to Laban for his dismissal. That greedy kinsman, well aware of the advantages which had accrued to him from Jacob's diligence, fidelity, and zeal, expresses much regret on hearing this proposal. But it is not regret at the thought of parting with his daughters and his grandchildren; it is not the tender concern of bidding a long farewell to a near relation and faithful servant; no, it is regret at losing an instrument of gain: it is the sorrow of a man who loves only himself.

Hitherto the profits of Jacob's industry had been wholly his uncle's. He had most ungenerously taken advantage of his nephew's passion for his daughter, to reduce him to the condition of a mere drudge, for his own interest. From a sense of shame, as well as a regard to interest, he is at length constrained to consent to Jacob's sharing the fruits of his own labour with him. Laban's craftiness had proved too hard for Jacob's candour and integrity; but the wisdom of Heaven, at last, proves more than a match for even the cunning of a Laban. Jacob, whether prompted from above, or instructed by natural sagacity aided by experience, proposes as his hire such a part of the flocks which he fed as should be in future produced of a certain description, "the ring-streaked, speckled, and spotted,"—which were so few in number, that they might rather be reckoned the sportings, than the regular productions of nature. Laban acquiesces without hesitation in this proposal: wondering in

himself, no doubt, that Jacob should be so simple as to make it. An entire separation is accordingly made, without delay, between the cattle of the description stipulated, and the rest of the flock. They are removed, to prevent all occasion of suspicion and complaint, to the distance of three days' journey; and are delivered into the custody of Laban's sons, men too like their father to throw any thing into Jacob's scale, either through good-will, neglect, or carelessness. Jacob continues to tend the remainder of the flocks, pure from all mixture, and they were by far the greatest part of the stock, for his father-in-law.

The device which he employed, and which seems to have been suggested to him in a dream, is well known to all who read the Scriptures. It has been disputed whether the success of it was in the ordinary course of natural cause and effect; or was entirely produced by a miraculous interposition in favour of our Patriarch. Indeed there seems, in it, much both of the one and of the other. That the female, in the moment of conception, should be more than usually susceptible of strong and extraordinary impressions, and capable of transmitting that impression to her young, so as clearly to mark and distinguish it, is too fully proved by experience to be denied. But this happens too seldom in the usual walk of nature, to permit us to suppose that the extraordinary increase of Jacob's cattle was in the mere current of things, aided a little by human sagacity and skill. That one lamb or kid should be marked with "the streaks of the poplar, hasel, and chesnut rods," or that one, here and there, through the flock,

should be thus distinguished, we can easily believe to happen without a miracle. But that the great bulk of the young should bear this signature; that, according as the impressing object was exhibited or withdrawn, the dams should conceive uniformly and correspondently, is on no principle of nature or of art to be accounted for. The finger of God is, therefore, to be seen and acknowledged in it. Thus was the condition of Jacob speedily and wonderfully changed to the better: "and the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses." And thus the world is instructed, that he who fears and follows God will, sooner or later, find his reward.

But it seems determined of Providence that Jacob should never find a place of rest. Lately he was poor and dependant, and thence anxious in his own mind, and liable to insult, and unkindness, and oppression from others: now he is rich and prosperous, and thence exposed to hatred and envy: and envy, like a plague, or a torrent, sweeps every thing before it. We may easily conceive with what watchful jealousy Jacob's carriage and his charge were observed by such men as Laban and his sons. With what astonishment and indignation did they see the best and most beautiful of the ewes and she-goats bringing forth nothing but "speckled and "spotted!" Their rage and discontent are, for a while, expressed by sullen looks and secret murmurs only; at length they become too violent to be suppressed, and break forth into open scurrility and abuse. The

tongue of the gloomy father indeed says nothing ; what can he say ? But his averted looks, his glaring, dissatisfied, indignant eyes, fully declare the anguish that preys upon his heart. One is malicious enough to enjoy it. It gives pleasure to see the envious man goaded and stung by the lashes and snakes of his own dark, empoisoned conscience, because it is a pleasure to see mankind happy. It gives one pleasure to see the generous rival of a sordid miser surpassing him in wealth, eclipsing him in estimation and success ; galling him by his prosperity and liberality.

Jacob, however, is unable to stand before envy, and judging it better for all parties that they should separate, in order to save himself the distress of encountering the bitter words and sour looks of unkind relations, and to spare them the misery of witnessing his growing prosperity, he proposes to return to his aged kind parents, from whom he was certain of meeting with a cordially affectionate reception. The dialogue which passed between Jacob and his wives upon this occasion, Gen. xxxi. 4—16, lets us deeper into the distresses and discomforts of his present condition, and exhibits the picture of a covetous man in still livelier, but therefore the more odious, colours. From it we learn that the sordid father, not contented with exacting of his son-in-law the rigorous performance of his hard bargain, according to the rules of strict justice ; and the justice of a miser is stern, unfeeling, and severe indeed, frequently had recourse to trick and

chicane, in order to over-reach and defraud him. No fidelity could please; no submission mollify, no attachment subdue, no tie of justice bind, no call of nature awaken his impenetrable selfish heart. "Ye know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, but God suffered him not to hurt me." "And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him as strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money." Whom do men commonly cherish and love with peculiar tenderness? Their daughters and grand-children. For whom do men usually save and gain, and lay up in store? For their daughters and grand-children. But behold a father who has sold his daughters for hire, who treats them as strangers to his blood, defrauds them of their undoubted right; behold a grand-father taking pleasure, not in the innocent prattle, not in the dawning genius, not in the increasing stature of the young ones descended from his own loins; not in smoothing for them the rugged path of life, not in extending and brightening their prospects, not in rearing and establishing their fortunes; but in diverting the streams of their subsistence, but in grasping to himself the hard-earned fruits of their father's industry, but in undermining, counteracting, destroying their interest and their hopes. How happy

is it for the world that this vile passion is neither immortal nor omnipotent!

God is, in despite of Laban, fulfilling to Jacob the covenant and promise ratified at Bethel. Jacob had stipulated but moderate things for himself, "bread to eat, and raiment to put on," whilst he was from home, and a peaceable and safe return to his father's house; and lo! an indulgent Providence has far exceeded his expectations, and even his desires. But if he be increased he is also encumbered; if his stock be larger, so is also his care: Have his comforts multiplied? he is but the more vulnerable. A retinue consisting of two wives and as many concubines, of twelve children, the eldest but thirteen years old and the youngest under seven, of the servants necessary to a family so numerous, of a live stock so extensive to be removed, and of the attendants absolutely needful for that purpose; a family such as this was in a condition very unfavourable to the journey which they are about to undertake, especially, liable as they were to be pursued and overtaken, by incensed Laban, or intercepted and cut off on the way, by the equally incensed Esau. But Jacob is following the direction of Heaven, and therefore he proceeds with humble confidence. What a destroyer of human comfort is wealth, that universal object of pursuit? See, it has alienated the affections of one man from his own family; it has driven another to flee from him as an enemy whom he had once sought unto as a friend,

In one shape or another this evil affection, I am afraid, is at the bottom of most of the ills which we do, and of most of the ills which we suffer. Jacob having communicated his intention to his family, and obtained their hearty concurrence, takes advantage of Laban's occupation in the business of his sheep shearing, to move homewards; and he has the felicity of gaining three days' journey, before the news of his flight has reached the uncle. But encumbered as he was, this is only a slight advantage, if a pursuit were attempted; and he must be indebted for his safety, after all, to the protection of that God whom he was following, and not to his own wisdom, foresight, speed, or force.

Jacob, undoubtedly, was scrupulously careful to remove nothing but what was, by a clear and undoubted title, his own. He who had, repeatedly and patiently, submitted to imposition and oppression, for the sake of quietness, was not likely to provoke enmity and justify vengeance, by robbery and plunder. But Rachel, in what view and for what reason it is not easy to determine, has "stolen away the images which were her father's." Many solutions have been attempted of this strange and unaccountable piece of theft. Some of them I shall just mention, leaving you to form your own judgment of the matter. It is alleged by some Rabbins, that she carried off the teraphim, or idols, lest her father by consulting them should discover the route which Jacob had taken, and so pursue with the greater certainty of overtaking him. Some ascribe

her conduct to piety and natural affection ; as if she meant to make Laban sensible of the weakness of such deities as would suffer themselves to be stolen away, without either giving notice of such a design, or making any resistance ; thereby hoping to detach her father from the absurdity and impiety of idol worship. Others, less charitably disposed towards her, represent her as a true daughter of Laban, instigated by covetousness to purloin the deities, for the value of the precious materials of which they were composed, or whereby they were ornamented. And Chrysostom, with almost equal severity, accounts for the robbery from her predilection toward idolatry.

Thus Jacob left his father-in-law ; or, to use the marginal reading, which is sufficiently warranted by the Hebrew words, “ stole away the heart of “ Laban the Syrian ;” that is, he either acted with so much prudence and caution that Laban suspected not, fathomed not his design ; or stole away that which was dear to him as his heart and soul, his precious, precious wealth. The sequel abundantly justifies this latter interpretation. For Laban is no sooner informed of his son-in-law’s escape, than, without the shadow of a pretence, either to molest him on his way, or to force him back, he makes after him with a powerful body of his friends, if not to plunder and murder him, at least to oblige him to return.

After seven days’ hasty marching he overtakes him and his cumbersome train in Mount Gilead, and he is ready to seize on his defenceless prey. But

the God in whom Jacob trusted plants around him a fence more impenetrable than the adamantine rock. Laban's gods could not hinder themselves from being stolen away by a simple woman, and from being packed up among other lumber to be conveyed off: but Jacob's God is watching and protecting him night and day; nay, watching his enemy too, to check and repress him. The vision of the Almighty is not only with them that fear him, to direct and comfort them, but sometimes also with them that fear him not, to restrain, to threaten, and to terrify them. God, in a dream by night, charges Laban, in a manner which he could not but understand, feel, and remember, at his peril to offer Jacob any injury in word or deed; "for when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemy to be at peace with him."

Thus warned he comes up with his nephew next morning, and like many, who when they are galled by an ill conscience endeavour to ease themselves of its reproaches by transferring the blame from themselves to the persons whom they have wronged; he reproaches Jacob with a conduct which, he well knew, had resulted entirely from his own harshness and severity. He upbraids him with unkind behaviour to his daughters, fully convinced all the while, that they had no ground of complaint against any one so much as against their own unnatural, unkind father, who had counted them as strangers: "for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our

"money." It is pleasant to hear a miserly wretch talk of the liberal and generous things which he *intended* to have done, after the call and the occasion are over, and when his generosity is in no danger of being brought to the test. "Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me? and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp? And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly, in so doing." But truth will appear through the closest disguise. With all this pompous parade of kindness and affection, he is weak enough to avow the violent purpose with which he had undertaken the pursuit, and from his father-in-law's own lips Jacob has the satisfaction to learn, that he owed his safety to the kind interposition of a heavenly, not to the altered mind of an earthly parent.

But figure to yourselves Jacob's surprise, when charged by Laban with having stolen his gods. If there was a thing about Laban's house more odious and contemptible, in his eyes, than another, it was his *Teraphim*. He would justly have reckoned such an impure mixture among his goods as the corrupter and destroyer of the whole. His defence therefore is simple yet forcible, because it is the language of genuine truth, and of conscious innocence and integrity. I like Jacob's speech throughout Gen. xxxi. 36—42. It is the language of a good and honest heart. Time permits not to make

a commentary upon it. Indeed it needs none. Observe only, in general, how generous is the fear which he expresses lest Laban should violently resume the wives whom he had given him. Some of them had been obtruded upon him by fraud, others by persuasion, but they are mothers to his children, and therefore he cannot bear to think of parting with them, though he might. How noble is the disdain and the indignation which he expresses, on being charged with the theft of Laban's gods! How manly the recapitulation of his past services and sufferings! How bold the defiance which he bids to malice and resentment! But it discovers too much of a great and generous spirit, to be passed over thus slightly. We must, therefore, resume it, and enlarge upon it; we now hasten to conclude, with a single idea of the analogy which we never wish for a moment to lose sight of. Jacob leaving Canaan, solitary and poor, banished from his father's house and degraded into slavery; and Jacob returning, loaded with the spoils of churlish Laban, and blessed with a numerous, prosperous, and increasing family, without a violent stretch of thought, prefigures to us—Jesus, descending from Heaven, and the original splendours of his nature, voluntarily depressing himself into the form of a servant, and meekly submitting, for a season, to accomplish a great and important purpose, to the want of the smiles of his Heavenly Father's countenance: and the glory that followed—his triumphant return to

Heaven, adorned with the spoils of death and hell, and attended by an innumerable train of spiritual sons and daughters, *acquired* in a strange land, adopted into the family of God, constituted heirs of glory, and, in due time, to be exalted with their glorious head to Heavenly thrones. May we, beloved, swell the triumph of that day, and find eternal rest from the toils and dangers of the way, in the bosom of our Father and our God. Amen.

LECTURE XXVII.

GENESIS XXXII. 9—11.

And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

THE man who is instructed to “acknowledge God in all his ways,” and he only, has found out the road that leads to true happiness. The cup of prosperity wants its choicest ingredient, when the love of our heavenly Father is not tasted in it; the bitterest potion, mingled by his hand, we can drink with confidence and cheerfulness. It is pleasant for a man to see his own sagacity and diligence crowned with success. But very imperfect is that pleasure, unless he can look up and say, with submission and gratitude, “The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith.”

There is a virulence in the ill which we bring upon ourselves, or which flow from the unkindness

or injustice of others, that corrodes the heart and depresses the spirit: but calamity which is the appointment of Heaven, calamity the discipline of a father's care and wisdom, brings its own relief along with it. The very poison administered by his hand becomes its own antidote; and what threatened to kill effects a cure. It would greatly tend to improve our wisdom, to promote our piety, and to increase our pleasure, were we to take frequent and particular reviews of our own life; and to observe the changes which have taken place in our circumstances from time to time; in connexion with the means and instruments which Providence more clearly, or more obscurely, has employed, and through which our enterprises have succeeded or failed. Many, very many, have arrived at situations to which, once in their lives, they durst not have presumed to aspire. But their present elevation and prosperity want their brightest ornament, and their firmest support, if they be destitute of that spirit which good Jacob breathes in the words I have now read; that spirit which ascribes every acquisition, every blessing, to the wonder-working hand of indulgent Heaven.

Few men have experienced greater varieties, greater reverses of condition, than our Patriarch; but we find him perpetually gathering strength from the hardships which he endured; supporting a life of uninterrupted, unutterable affliction, with patience and fortitude; suffering and feeling as a man, but enduring and overcoming as a saint; and, at length, closing

the extended scene of woe with the triumph of a believer, exulting in the bright, unclouded prospects of immortality.

One general remark may be applied to his whole history. His deepest distresses spring out of his choicest comforts; his most signal successes take their rise from his heaviest afflictions. The attainment of the birth-right, and of the blessing, drives him into banishment; the labour, watchfulness, and anxiety of a shepherd's life conduct him to opulence and importance. The elevation which he too eagerly grasped at is the cause of his depression; the humiliation to which he voluntarily and patiently submitted, becomes the foundation of his future greatness. The partial fondness of a mother exposes him to the unnatural unkindness and severity of an uncle; the jealousy and envy of malevolent and selfish brothers-in-law drive him back to the calm delights of his father's house.

After twenty years' hard service, under Laban, which that ungenerous kinsman repaid with harshness, injustice, and deceit, but which God was pleased bountifully to reward by a numerous and thriving progeny, and by large possessions; he sets out secretly, to shun the mortification which he daily endured, for the land of Canaan. He is hotly pursued, and with hostile dispositions, by his father-in-law, and overtaken, encumbered as he was, on the seventh day, in Mount Gilead. Providence once more interposes in his behalf, and protects him from Laban's fury. Charged with undutiful-

ness and disrespect, and accused of a robbery which he would rather have died than commit, he defends himself with the spirit of a man, with the dignity of conscious innocence, and with the awful superiority of truth and virtue. Those who have a taste for the modest, manly, simple, pathetic eloquence of a good and honest heart, will, I am persuaded, find much pleasure in the perusal of Jacob's reply to Laban's charge. "And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? What is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff; what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set it here before my brethren, and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. This twenty years have I been with thee: thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beast, I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it: of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus I have been twenty years in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath

“ seen mine affliction, and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.” The power of truth is irresistible: and even Laban, though with an ill grace, is constrained to yield to it; and matters are at length amicably settled to their mutual satisfaction. To prevent as much as possible all future ground of fear and suspicion, a covenant of peace and good will is ratified between them, with all the solemnities of a sacrifice, an oath, a monumental pillar, and a feast of love.

In the whole of this transaction we cannot help remarking that Laban, the party who had the wicked intention, and the guilty conscience, is the first to propose, and the most eager to employ, the awful formalities of compacts, and promises, and oaths. He knew that he himself needed to be thus bound, and therefore judges it necessary thus to bind the other. Laws are made for the violent and injurious; covenants are necessary to bind the false and perfidious; the light of an upright heart is its own law, the conscience of an honest man is his own faithful witness, his own tremendous judge. What signifies the opinion of the world to conscious integrity? “The conscious mind is its own awful world.”

Guilt is timorous, jealous, and suspecting; innocence is bold, believing, and generous. Laban employs the most words; Jacob has the purer and more righteous intention. Laban does justice, not from a regard to duty, but through fear of detection and punishment; Jacob speaks and practises truth because he loves it. The forms of religion are

employed by Laban to perfect the security which he wanted; Jacob scruples not to superadd the form, where he felt the power. Laban swears, that he might hold the other fast; Jacob, because he fears an oath, and is willing at once to satisfy the other, and to bind himself. Laban, an idolater, calls to witness the gods whom the ancestors of Abraham and Nahor served beyond the flood; Jacob, a worshipper of the living and true God swears by "the fear of his father Isaac," the God who has power to save and to destroy. /

The agreement being thus solemnly ratified, and the hour of separation at length come, they part with mutual satisfaction; Laban, with the self-gratulation of having made a virtue of necessity; and Jacob, well pleased to have escaped so happily from a danger so threatening. Laban returns with his train to Haran, and we hear of him no more; and little does it signify what became of an old miserly knave, whose name had been better blotted out of every record, than transmitted to posterity with so many notes of infamy upon it; and Jacob goes on his way rejoicing, towards Canaan, beloved of God and respected of men.

He has hardly bidden his father-in-law farewell when we find the angels of God pressing forwards to meet him. Gen. xxxii. 1. The History of those superior beings, and of their commerce with mankind, is so brief, so obscure, and so figurative, as rather to excite curiosity than to gratify it; it serves rather to furnish matter for speculation, than to con-

vey distinct, full, and exact information. By the *angels* of God, who are said to have met Jacob on this occasion, some understand merely human messengers, whether deputed from among his own attendants, to explore the country through which he was to travel, or some friendly strangers, directed that way by Providence, to warn him of the approach of his brother Esau. But we cannot materially err by taking the words of Moses in their literal acceptation, and according to the more obvious sense which they convey. "Wherefore should it be "thought a thing incredible," that the same merciful God who condescended to visit Jacob's sleep at *Bethel*, with a vision of angels, ascending and descending from Heaven to earth, to cheer and encourage his solitary progress to Haran, should vouchsafe to bless his waking thoughts at *Mahanaim*, with a visit of those ministering spirits, in a bodily form, to be the image and the assurance of the divine favour and protection, in every hour of danger, in every time of need? What had that man to fear from the rage of an incensed brother, though followed by an armed host, around whom the angels of the Lord encamped in two hosts or bands?

Whether the History, in this place, is to be understood literally or figuratively, whether these angels were human, or supernatural beings, this, in either view, well deserves remark, that Jacob was not induced, in confidence of the vision, to neglect any one duty of piety or of prudence. Piety dictates that address and recommendation of himself to

the God of angels and of men, which we read in the opening of our discourse, and in which he chiefly rested his safety: and prudence made such a wise arrangement of his affairs as might either gain a brother by kindness, melt him by submission, or oppose him with success.

The religion which aiming at things uncommon, miraculous, or preternatural, neglects or despises the plain tract of reason and revelation, is dangerous, and to be suspected; it ministers too much to human vanity; it would establish a standard vague, variable, and capricious as the wild imagination of man; and making every one, in matters of faith, a law unto himself, would depreciate the sure word of prophecy, which yields a steady, uniform, and certain light, to illuminate a dark world.

The disposition of his company, which Jacob made in the view of meeting his brother either as a friend or as an enemy, discovers the deepest wisdom and penetration. Every thing that might revive the memory of their ancient grudge is artfully suppressed. If there appears any ostentation of wealth, it is wealth devoted to the use and service of a brother. The message put into the mouths of the servants who conducted the droves of cattle, which were to be successively delivered to Esau, is wonderfully calculated to turn away the wrath of an angry man, "my Lord Esau," "thy servant Jacob." And the present, judiciously intended to disarm and mollify him, is, with equal judgment, exhibited and tendered, not all at once, but slowly and gradually,

insensibly to steal upon his heart, and imperceptibly to lull all his resentments asleep. He appears voluntarily paying a tribute of duty and affection, as to his sovereign, not haughtily exacting submission and acknowledgment, as from his vassal. Fear for his own life had driven him, twenty years ago, from the face of Esau, and now that his being is, as it were, multiplied in the persons of so many, dear to him as his own soul, his apprehension increases in proportion.

We cannot but observe, though we need not much wonder at, the partiality discovered in settling the order of this domestic procession. The beloved wife and her darling son are placed in the rear, farthest from danger, if danger there were, because first in the attention and respect of the fond husband and father. Unhappy Jacob, whether shall we pity or blame thee? In this management we behold the dawnings of that unwise and unfortunate preference, which afterwards raised such a tempest in the family, and pierced through the paternal heart with so many sorrows.

The thirty-second chapter of this Sacred Book concludes with the history of an event in Jacob's life so very singular and mysterious, as to baffle interpretation and defy criticism: I mean his wrestling with a person unknown, in the form of a man, whom he afterwards describes as God, and against whom he prevailed in the contest. If this transaction is to be understood according to the letter, Spirit of God has seen meet to withhold the nar-

tion of some particulars necessary to a clear and distinct comprehension of it; and the inquirer is stopped short with the reply of the wrestler to Jacob's request, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name;" "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?"

The figurative meaning, and the practical intention and application are more obvious; and it is this, indeed, with which we have chiefly to do. Jacob was, that very morning, to meet Esau his brother, who was advancing towards him at the head of four hundred men. Uncertain as to his disposition and intentions; conscious of having given him much cause of offence; and apprized of the menacing and resentful language which he had formerly held concerning him, Jacob shudders to think of the consequences of this formidable rencounter. And, having first poured out his soul to God in such a dreadful emergency, and then adopted the measures for safety, which wisdom and the necessity of his situation suggested; he again, it is natural to suppose, might have recourse to earnest prayer and supplication, and continue in it during a great part of the night and morning. This, in the forcible and figurative phrase of Oriental language, might be expressed by his "wrestling" with God "to the dawning of the day;" and his at length prevailing so far as to obtain from God some sensible sign or token, to assure him that he should be carried through this, as through his other dangers and distresses, undestroyed, unhurt. The sign given him was calculated at once to express approbation of his

faith, fortitude, and perseverance; and to convince him of his inferiority and weakness. The unknown wrestler, though seemingly foiled in the combat, by a simple touch dislocates a joint in the hollow of Jacob's thigh, and thereby disables him from continuing the struggle. Might not the wisdom of God be employing such mystical representation and expression, to instruct them in the nature of prayer, and to enforce the obligation of it: "To the end that we should pray always, and not faint?" Do we prevail in our applications at the throne of grace? It is because our Heavenly Father is disposed to yield, and stands out only to heighten our exertions, and to call forth our importunity. Have we power with God, and prevail? Then what is man who shall die, and the son of man who is a worm? Did Jacob sink and fail in the very moment of victory? We are just what God makes or permits us to be.

Whatever were the real circumstances of this extraordinary scene, it procured for Jacob a new and an honourable name, which obliterated to his posterity, if not altogether to himself, that less honourable appellation which commemorated a little, though significant incident, attending his birth; and which recorded the infamy of his unfair dealings with his father and brother; *Jacob*, the *supplanter*, is transformed into *Israel*, a *prince with God*.

The vision of the Almighty is scarcely over when the interview with Esau takes place; and we are then fittest for every service, for every trial, when

we have settled matters with Heaven. He who, by a touch, disjoined Jacob's thigh, could, by a word, have scattered Esau's host. But behold a greater miracle! By a simple act of his sovereign will he has, in a moment, changed Esau's heart. They meet, they converse, they love as brothers ought. And "O how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" We apprehended a strife of fierce and angry looks, of reproachful words, of violence and blood. But how joyful the disappointment! Behold a contention of kindness; a blessed contest of affection; the honest, heart-melting triumph of nature, the noble victory of goodness. Let the proud and the resentful peruse with care this inimitable scene of tenderness, painted in colours so bright and so touching by the pencil of inspiration, Gen. xxxiii. 4—15, and say whether it be possible for any gratification of revenge, any depression of a hated rival, any triumph of violence and blood, to yield what deserves the name of joy, compared with the sweet satisfaction which must have filled the bosoms of this pair of brothers, burying animosity and discord in mutual endearments, and in expressions of good will. Ah! Why should so many wretched brothers as there are of us, pass through a world in which there is so much unavoidable misery, estranged from each other; or madly, wantonly, wickedly interrupt and disturb each other's passage, by bitterness and wrath! What wretched things are wealth, and pomp, and state, and power, which will not permit brothers to live

together in love as they ought, and as, but for one or other of those disturbers of human quiet, they would!

Such scenes as that which now passed between Jacob and Esau ought to have been perpetual. But alas, it cannot be! Esau must return to his possession in mount Seir that very day; and Jacob must pursue his journey to Canaan. The paternal roof must no more cover their heads again at one and the same time, nor the affectionate parents ever enjoy the supreme felicity of witnessing their reconciliation, and of strengthening it by their blessing and their prayers. Let the lower ranks of mankind rejoice that a gracious Providence, in withholding from them affluence, station, and distinction, has left them a blessing greater than all these put together, friendship, and the means of exercising and enjoying it. Parents, as ye love your children, and wish to have them near you, and to bless you with a sight of their health and prosperity, be moderate in your views and efforts concerning them. Prospects of ambition or of avarice will of necessity banish them from your sight, will separate them from each other, will scatter them upon the face of the earth.

Jacob by slow movements, as the delicate condition of part of his retinue required, advances homewards in a south-west direction, from the ford of Penuel, on the south bank of the Jabbok, towards Jordan; and arrived safe at the ford of Succoth, so called from the *booths* which he erected there for a

temporary repose to himself and family, in the plains of Jordan, about twelve or fifteen miles from Peniel ; ten miles south of the sea of Galilee ; and five south of the Jabbok, where it runs into Jordan : a city afterwards assigned by lot to the tribe of Gad. After resting at Succoth, about a month, he proceeds to travel from Jordan, west and by south, about thirty-five miles ; and arrives, in peace and safety, according to the promise and covenant of the God of Bethel ratified more than twenty years before, at Shechem, the city of Hamor the Hivite, of whom he bought a field, in the same place where Abraham first pitched his tent upon coming into Canaan. And there Jacob erected an altar, and dedicated it by the name of *El-Elohe-Israel, God, the God of Israel*. Now, this event happened in the year of the world two thousand two hundred and sixty-six ; before Christ, one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight ; after the flood, six hundred and ten ; from the peregrination of Abraham, one hundred and eighty-three ; before Jacob's descent into Egypt, thirty-two ; before the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt, two hundred and forty-seven ; and in the year of Jacob's life, ninety-eight : Isaac, his aged father, living then at Beersheba, one hundred and fifty-seven years old. And this naturally furnishes another resting place in the History of our Patriarch.

The next lecture, if God permit, will resume the subject and carry it forward. We detain you for a moment to suggest a few thoughts on the analogy

of Jacob and Christ from this portion of the Scripture history. How beautifully, and how exactly, does the account which Jacob gives of himself as a shepherd, correspond to the character of "the good Shepherd, who giveth his life for the sheep?" "This twenty years have I been with thee: thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it: of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes."—"And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me, and the children, be able to endure; until I come unto my lord unto Seir." And of whom speaketh the Prophet? "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Angels thus ministering to the heir of the promise, at *Bethel*, at *Mahanaim*, lead our thoughts directly to the *Annunciation*, the *Nativity*, the *Temptation* in the wilderness, the *Agony* in the garden, the *Resurrection*, the *Ascension*; the *second coming* of our blessed Lord. The wrestling at Penue! is a strong

figurative description of the powerful and prevalent intercession of the Prince with God, Messiah himself, whose language is not, "Father, I beseech thee," but "Father, I will." Jacob's safe and happy return to Canaan, and to his father's house, every enemy being subdued either by fear or by love, accompanied by two bands of sons and daughters, gotten in the land where he was a stranger, and where he had been humbled and oppressed,—pre-figures, as suggested in a former discourse, the triumphant return of the great Captain of salvation to his Father's house above, loaded with the spoils of principalities and powers; the powers of hell vanquished by force, an elect world redeemed, rescued by love. "His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory;" "he shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet," "sing praises to his name, sing praise." "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood: and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

Sacred Biography;
OR THE
HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS:
BEING
A COURSE OF LECTURES,

DELIVERED AT
THE SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY
HENRY HUNTER, D.D.

VOLUME II.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.

John viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Revelation i. 8.

Seventh Edition.

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from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had: and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh; and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

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- Luke xx. 27—38.—Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother

should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were, therefore, seven brethren; and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels: and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

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Exod. xii. 26, 27.—And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians; and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

WITH

Psalms xci. 5—8.—Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day: nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come

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Exod. xiii. 17—22.—And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent, when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them, by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

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Exod. xv. 1, 2.—Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation: my father's God, and I will exalt him.

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Exod. xv. 23—27. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah; for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to

his commandments, and keep all his statutes; I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters.

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Exod. xvii. 1, 2. 5, 6.—And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the

commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim : and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water, that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? —And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel : and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb ; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

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Exod. xvii. 8—13.—Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek : to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek : and Moses, Aaron, and Hur, went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed : and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy ; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon : and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side ; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people, with the edge of the sword.

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Exod. xviii. 7—12.—And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him: and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians, for Israel's sake, and all the travel that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law, before God.

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Exod. xix. 16—22.—And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud: so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood

at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.

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Josh. i. 17.—According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

John i. 17.—For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

LECTURE I.

GENESIS XLII. 36—38.

And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me. And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

IT is a pleasing and an useful employment, to trace important events up to their sources; to mark the gradual progress of human affairs; to observe the same persons at different periods of their existence, and in different situations; to discover on what delicate hinges their fortunes have turned; and to contemplate the wisdom, power, and goodness of divine Providence, in producing the greatest effects from the slightest and most unlikely causes. There is no greater error in conduct than to reckon certain actions, relating to morals, trifling and insignificant. When revolutions in private families, and in empires

are pursued up to the springs from whence they flow, they are often found to commence in some little error, inadvertency, or folly, which at the time might have been despised or neglected; just as mighty rivers begin their course in some paltry obscure stream, which the peasant could dry up with the sole of his foot. The past is infinitely less perspicuous to the eye of human understanding, than the future is to divine intelligence; God "seeth" the end from the beginning, saying, My counsel "shall stand, and I will fulfill all my pleasure." The periods which make the most brilliant figure in the page of History were periods of anxiety and trouble to the men and the nations who then figured on the scene. A life of many incidents is a life of much distress. When the writer has got a great deal to relate, the person whose life is recorded has had a great deal to suffer.

Much more is written of Jacob than of any other of the Patriarchs. Alas! It is only saying, that his miseries were much more numerous and severe. In a life shorter than his father's by thirty-three years, calamity so crowded upon calamity, that it seems extended to the utmost stretch of even antediluvian longevity. What hour of his mature age is free from pain and sorrow? Not one! In what region does he find repose? No where. Canaan, Haran, Egypt, are to him almost equally inclement. As a son, a servant, a husband, a father; in youth, in manhood, in old age, he is unremittingly afflicted; and no sooner is one difficulty surmounted, one woe

past, than another and a greater overtakes him. Formerly, he had youthful blood and spirits to encounter and to endure the ills of life; hope still cheered the heart, and scattered the cloud; but now, behold the hoary head sinking with sorrow to the grave; the spirit, oppressed, overwhelmed with a sea of trouble. Keen recollection summons up the ghosts of former afflictions, and past joys recur only to remind him that they are gone for ever; and black despair obscures, excludes the prospect of good to come. What heart is not wrung, at hearing a poor old man, closing the bitter recapitulation of his misfortunes in the words which I have read, "All, all " these things are against me."

Perhaps the life of no other man affords a like instance of accumulated distress. The mournful detail of this evening will present, collected within the compass of not many months, a series of the heaviest afflictions that ever man endured; and all springing up out of objects in which the heart naturally seeks and expects delight. An only daughter, dishonoured—His eldest hope stained with incest—Simeon and Levi polluted with innocent blood—Judah joined in marriage to a woman of Canaan, and become a father by his own daughter-in-law—Joseph torn in pieces by wild beasts—His beloved Rachel lost in child-birth—His venerable father taken away in the course of nature—The miserable wreck and remains of his family ready to perish with famine—Simeon a prisoner in Egypt,—and Benjamin, the only re-

maining pledge of his Rachel's love, demanded from him. What sorrow was ever like this sorrow? "This is the man who hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath."

And does all a partial mother's fondness; do all a father's blessings, wishes, and prayers; do all the promises and predictions of Heaven, issue in this? "If in this life only there were hope," who so miserable as God's dearest children? Whose lot is so much to be deplored as that of Jacob the son of Isaac?

Jacob, after an absence of more than twenty years, has returned to the land of his nativity. A guardian Providence has protected and delivered him from his avowed enemies, from Laban, and from Esau; but the most dangerous enemies of his repose are still nearer to him, they "are those of his own house." He has purchased an estate, he has spread his tent, he has erected his altar; his "mountain stands strong." What can move him? From what slight beginnings do great events arise! Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, prompted by female vanity, curiosity, or some other motive equally deserving blame, ventures, unattended, beyond the verge of the paternal superintendence and protection, and falls into danger and shame. She went out, says the Scripture, "to see the daughters of the land." Josephus affirms that she was attracted by the celebration of a great public festival, according to the manners of the country. Her youth, innocence, and inexperience inspire confidence; novelty awakens

curiosity ; beauty tempts, opportunity favours, and virtue is lost.

From the first transgression down to this day, female disgrace and ruin have begun in the gratification of an inordinate desire to see and to know some new thing ; in a powerful inclination to exhibit themselves, and to observe others. One daughter of Israel is much more likely to be corrupted by communication with many daughters of Canaan, than they are to be improved by the conversation of that one. There is much wisdom, my friends, in keeping far, very far within your bounds, There is danger, great danger in advancing to the utmost limit of liberty and virtue. For the extreme boundary of virtue is also the extreme boundary of vice ; and she who goes every length that she lawfully may, is but half a step from going farther than she ought, or perhaps she intended.

Desire is commonly extinguished by gratification ; but it is also sometimes inflamed. And so it was with Shechem. The first disorder of his passion, and its effects, are not more to his shame than the reparation which he intended and attempted is to his honour. Indeed, if we except the leading step in this transaction, the whole proceeding, on the part of the young prince, is noble and generous to a high degree ; and it loudly reproves and strikingly exposes the cool, the cruel, the remorseless seducers of a Christian age, and of a civilized country.

The unhappy father receives the news of his daughter's dishonour with silent sorrow : and how

often does he wish, in the sequel, that he had for ever buried his grief in his own heart? Hamor readily adopts the views of his son, disdains not the alliance of a shepherd, courts Dinah though humbled, with all the respect due to a princess, and with all the munificence becoming one who was himself a sovereign. Those who are fathers, who have daughters for whom they feel, or for whom they fear, will judge of Jacob's satisfaction at this proposal. How desirable was it to have the wound made in the fond paternal heart instantly closed up; to have the stain upon his name wiped clean away; to have his darling child's peace and reputation restored; to have an honourable alliance formed with a wealthy, virtuous, and generous prince; and a whole people proselyted from idols to the God of Israel! How many sources of exquisite satisfaction! Is the black cloud gathered over Jacob's head going for once to descend in refreshing drops, is it going for once to burst and to disperse itself into calmness and serenity? Alas, alas! The tempest is only gathering thicker around him, and dreadful must the discharge of it be.

The heart shudders at the sequel. Simeon and Levi, two brothers german of Dinah, and who on that account think themselves peculiarly concerned in the vindication of their sister's honour, affect to receive Shechem's overtures with complacency. They have no scruples but what arise from religion; let these be removed, and the way is cleared at once. Deep, designing, dissembling villains! The ordinance of God is in their mouths, the malice

of the devil lies brooding in their hearts : they recommend a sacrament, and they are preparing a sacrifice, a horrid human sacrifice, consisting of many victims.

There is not a more singular fact in all history, than the ready compliance of the whole inhabitants of Shechem with the proposal of changing their religion, and of receiving, at so late a period in life, the painful sign of circumcision. Great must have been the authority which Hamor had over them, or great the affection which they bore him. Unhappy man ; he practised a little deceit in stating the case to his people, but was himself much more grossly deceived. And it is extremely doubtful whether he would have prevailed, had not the temptation of Jacob's cattle, and of his other substance, been held out as a motive to obtain their consent. Comply however they did—and it proved fatal to them : for on the third day, the two sons of Jacob already mentioned, attended probably by a band of their friends and servants, rushed upon them, and put them all to the sword. “ Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce ; and their wrath, for it was cruel : “ I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in “ Israel.”

We nowhere meet with an instance of more savage, indiscriminating barbarity. For the offence of one a whole nation is mercilessly cut off ; and rapine closes the scene of blood, for they plundered the city, and carried off the wretched women captive, whose husbands they had slain. Horrid, infernal

passion! And how was Dinah's honour repaired by this? And these simple, easy, believing men, these harmless, unoffending women, what had they done? Daughters of Canaan! dearly have ye bought the favour of a visit from Jacob's daughter. Idle and unhallowed was the opening of the scene, and dreadful has the conclusion been. It would not have been surprising to hear of a confederacy among all the neighbouring states, to exterminate such a band of robbers and murderers from the face of the earth. Jacob is justly alarmed with the apprehension of this, and, warned of God, removes from the neighbourhood of Shechem to Bethel; a spot that brought to his recollection calmer, happier days—when he was flying, indeed, from his country, without wealth, without a friend; but free also from the anxiety, the vexation, and the care which an increased family and abounding wealth have brought upon him. How much better is it to go childless, than have children to be the grief and plague of a man's heart?

Being arrived at Bethel, where he had been blessed with the visions of the Almighty on his way to Padan-aram, he deems it a proper time and place to purge his family of every vestige of idolatry. It is no easy matter to live in an idolatrous, or irreligious country, without losing a sense of religion, or acquiring a wrong one. This is one of the greatest evils which attend travelling into distant lands. Our young men who reside long abroad, whatever else they bring back to their native country, gene-

rally drop by the way the pious principles which they were taught in their youth. Some persons very nearly related to Jacob, it is to be suspected, had a violent hankering after the gods beyond the flood. Why else did Rachel steal away the images which were her father's? However that may be, Jacob now disposes of them in a proper manner, and buries every shred that could minister to idolatry, under the oak that was by Shechem. The conduct of Jacob's sons had, of necessity, awakened a hostile spirit in the country against him, which had it not been providentially restrained, must have proved fatal to him, but "the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob."

About this time, a breach was made in the family, by the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse; the threatening, and the forerunner, of a much heavier stroke: for just after they had left Bethel, as he was on his way finally to join his father, with all his family, with a heart exulting, no doubt, in the prospect of presenting to his venerable parents the wives and children which God had given him, Rachel, his much-loved Rachel, is suddenly taken in labour, by the way side, and dies after bearing another son. Unhappy woman, she falls a victim to what she had coveted so earnestly. "Give me children else I die," in her haste, in the bitterness of her heart, she exclaimed: she obtains her wish, and it proves fatal to her; God gives her children,

and she dies. Resentment at her vehemence and impatience is absorbed in sorrow for her loss.

The history does not expand itself here, but simply relates the fact. Some causes are injured, not assisted by a multiplicity of words. The feelings of the Patriarch, on this occasion, are rather to be conceived than described. Rachel, early, constantly, tenderly loved; Rachel, earned with long and severe servitude; Rachel, endeared by knowledge and habit, and rendered more important and valuable by fruitfulness, could not be lost without pain. It was natural for the dying mother to think of perpetuating the memory of her mortal anguish, by giving the son whom she brought into life at the expense of her own, the name of *Ben-oni*, "the son of my sorrow;" it was wise and pious in the surviving father, to preserve rather the memory of the benefit received, than of the loss sustained; and by the name of *Benjamin*, "the son of my right hand," to mark and record submission to, and trust in, Providence, rather than to perpetuate his grief by retaining the maternal appellation, which seemed to murmur at, and to reflect upon, the dispensations of the Almighty. Dying in childbirth, it was found necessary to bury her with greater expedition than a removal of the corpse to the cave of Machpelah permitted: though there the precious dust of Sarah, and of Abraham, reposed. And, as it is happily ordered by nature, Jacob amuses, soothes, and spends his grief, which might

otherwise have oppressed and spent him, in erecting a monument to Rachel's memory. Thus what the heart, in the first paroxysm of its anguish, intends as the means of rendering grief lasting or continual, gradually, imperceptibly, and most graciously extinguishes it altogether.

While this wound was still bleeding, the Patriarch's heart is pierced through with another stroke, if not so acute, perhaps more overwhelming. Reuben, his eldest hope, raised and distinguished by Providence, placed in the foremost rank among many brethren, degrades and dishonours himself by the commission of a crime which modesty blushes to think of, and "such as is not so much as named "among the Gentiles;" a crime which blended the guilt and shame of another with his own; and which could not make the usual apologies of surprise, of temptation, or of passion for itself. But let us hasten from it. We can sit and weep awhile upon the grave of Rachel; but from the incestuous couch of Reuben imagination flies away with horror and disgust. What a dreadful, licentious, irregular, and disorderly family is the family of pious Jacob! Each of his sons is worse and more wicked than another. Accursed Laban! We discern thy infernal avarice at the bottom of all this disorder and wickedness! It was that which first introduced a multiplicity of wives into Jacob's bosom, it was that which created and kept up jarring interests in his family, and gave birth to those unhallowed, disgraceful, headstrong passions, which disturbed his

peace, pierced his heart, and dishonoured his name.

An affliction, more in the order of nature, and whose certain and gradual approach must have prepared the heart to meet it, at length overtakes him. After an absence of more than twenty years he rejoins his aged father, now in his one hundred and sixty-third year, at Arbah, afterwards called Hebron; "the city where Abraham and Isaac so-journed." It does not appear whether Rebekah yet lived or no. If she did, what must have been her feelings at embracing her long lost darling son; and at finding him so abundantly increased, in children and in wealth? Pure and perfect is the delight of a grand-mother, as she caresses the young ones of a beloved child, the heirs and representatives of the husband of her youth, the supporters of his name, of his prospects, and of his dignity.

In presenting his family to his father Jacob must have been agitated by various and mixed emotions. It was natural for the old man to inquire minutely into the event of his son's life, during the tedious years of their separation; into the characters and qualities of his grand-children: into the state of Jacob's worldly circumstances; much more, into the state of his mind, as a believer and the heir of the promise. The answer to those parental inquiries must, of necessity, have awakened in the bosom of the wretched sufferer ten thousand melancholy and painful sensations; must have torn open afresh those wounds which the lenient hand of time had

begun to close up. The hardships which he endured in Padan-aram, the severity, churlishness, and deceit of Laban, would rise again to view ; and almost every child, as he presented them one by one to his sire, must have suggested some mortifying and distressful circumstance to wring his heart. Dinah, not in the bloom and dignity of virgin innocence, but humbled and dishonoured, robbed of that which makes youth lovely and age respected; Simeon and Levi, her brothers, polluted with innocent blood ; and Reuben, his “ first-born, his “ might, and the beginning of his strength, the “ excellency of dignity, and the excellency of “ power,” stained with incest : Judah, his fourth son, who had begun to build up a family of his own, but it was by a Canaanitish woman, whose progeny involved him in complicated guilt, and covered him shame ; Joseph and Benjamin, fair as the opening blossoms of the vernal rose, and precious as the purple fluid which visited his sad heart : but alas ! the highly-valued stock which had shot forth these two lovely branches, prematurely cut down and withered ; his beloved Rachel is no more ; and he is deprived of even the poor consolation of reflecting, that her sacred dust slept in the same tomb with that of his venerable ancestors. But to have the privilege of pouring his sorrows into the bosom of a father was the alleviation, if not the cure, of all these ; and he who by meditation, and faith, and prayer, had overcome the world, and lived so long in Heaven, was well qualified for ad.

ministering the vivifying cordial to the fainting soul, to apply the sovereign balm to the aching heart of a son, who had been a still greater sufferer than himself.

But the calamities of neither the father nor the son, are as yet come to a period; and they have still to interchange sorrows, for a loss more bitter and oppressive than any which they have yet endured. For, in little more than six years from their re-union, while Isaac, now one hundred and seventy years old, was patiently looking for his dismissal from this scene of trouble, and preparing to enter the harbour of eternal rest, he is driven back upon the tempestuous ocean, and doomed to toil and grieve ten years more of a weary life, deploring an affliction which admitted of no consolation, and which at length brought his white head with sorrow to the grave. At this period it was that Joseph, beautiful and young; Joseph, the delight of God and man; Joseph, the memorial of Rachel, the pride of Jacob, the prop of Isaac's old age, disappeared, and was heard of no more till many years after his venerable grandsire slept in the dust.

Jacob, sinking himself into the dust under the pressure of a burthen which nature was unable to sustain, is at length called to perform the last sad office of filial affection, and to lay his hand upon the already extinguished orbs of his honoured father: willing, and longing, I am persuaded, to have descended with him into the grave. But not the least eventful part of his history is yet to come.

It will, henceforward, be blended with that of Joseph, which now solicits our attention. O could we but bring to the study and display of it a small portion of that native simplicity, that divine eloquence, that celestial energy, which glow and shine upon the hallowed page of Inspiration! With what delight and success should we then speak; and with what pleasure and profit should you then lend a listening ear!

The story of Jacob, as it proceeds, teaches many useful lessons for the conduct of life, and opens many sources of religious instruction. Who would not rather be honest, unsuspecting, believing Jacob, than dark, designing, selfish Laban? And yet who does not see the necessity of blending the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove? We mourn to think on the prevalence of those fiery and ungovernable passions which separate, and scatter, and alienate those whom God and nature designed to live together, and to love one another, and which robs human life of many instants of felicity which might have been in it. Why should Isaac and Jacob have lived twenty years asunder, to their mutual discomfort and distress? The vile spirit of this evil world arose; the spirit of pride, emulation, ambition, avarice, fear, revenge, drove Jacob into a miserable exile, and left his father a forlorn, forsaken, anxious, blind old man. Happy that poverty which permits the parent and his child to cherish each other, till the cold hand of death chill the heart! Happy obscurity, which excludes

envy, and forces not a man to be an enemy to his own brother!

We have seen in the Patriarch a man like ourselves, "bruised and put to grief," the image of "one greater man," "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," whose woes commenced in the *manger*, and ceased not till they were lulled to rest in the *tomb*. "The son of man," who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "The heir of all things," who emptied himself, and voluntarily assumed "the form of a servant."

"And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem." "And Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables: And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence: make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

Jacob presented to his father a numerous and thriving offspring; but children perverse and corrupted, their father's shame and sorrow. But when our Spiritual Head shall present his redeemed "to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God," saying, "Here am I, and the children

“ thou hast given me,” the parental eye shall discern in them “ neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing.” Our Father in heaven ever lives, “ exalted, that he may show mercy;” our “ Redeemer liveth,” “ he is risen again, he is even at the right hand of God, he also maketh intercession for us.”

LECTURE II.

GENESIS XXXVII. 3, 4.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age : and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

THE history of mankind exhibits an unceasing contention between the folly and wickedness of man, and the Wisdom and Goodness of God. Men are continually striving to outdo, to mortify, and to hurt each other ; but a gracious Providence, by opposing spirit to spirit, interest to interest, force to force, preserves the balance, and supports the fabric. His sovereign power and matchless skill produce exquisite harmony from the confused, the contending, the discordant tones of human passions. He controls and subdues a diversity which threatened disorder, separation, and destruction, into a variety which pleases, which unites, which cements and preserves mankind. And a more consolatory, a more composing, a more satisfying view of the divine Providence we cannot indulge ourselves in, than this merciful superintendence which it condescends to take of the affairs of men, and of every thing that affects their virtue or their happiness. The disorders which prevail in the natural world,

under the subduing hand of Heaven, range themselves into order and peace. The convulsions that shake and disturb the moral world, directed, checked, and counterbalanced, by a power much mightier than themselves, subside into tranquillity, through the very agitation and violence which they had acquired. "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain." When the tumult is over, and the noise ceases, Religion rears up her head, and says in the words of Joseph to his brethren, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

We are now come to a passage of the Sacred History of uncommon beauty and importance; whether we consider the simplicity and grace of the narration, the affecting circumstances of the story, the interesting and instructive views of the human heart which it unfolds, the many plain and useful lessons which it teaches. Above all from the mighty consequences, both near and remote, which resulted to the family of Jacob, to the Egyptian monarchy, and to the human race, from incidents, at first, insignificant and seemingly contemptible, but gradually swelling into magnitude, embracing circle after circle, extending from period to period, till all time and space are occupied by them.

Isaac was now as good as dead, calmly looking forward to his latter end; alive only to sentiments

of piety and of pain; and Jacob was, at length, settled in the land wherein his father was a stranger; increased in wealth, rich in children, rich in piety, but advanced in years and loaded with affliction. Jacob's family, the salt of the earth, was itself in a very putrid and corrupted state; and the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel were themselves very bad men. The unhappy father endeavours to soothe anguish, arising from the ill-behaviour of his grown-up sons, by the pleasing prospects which the more amiable qualities of his younger children opened to him.

The sacred Historian introduces to us the favourite character of Joseph with wonderful art and skill. From the very first moment we become interested in him. He is the long expected son of beauteous Rachel—his mother was dead—he had now attained his seventeenth year—and he was the darling object of his father's affection. Jacob's affection, however, has not blinded him so far as to bring up even his favourite son in idleness. Little does that man consult either the credit or the comfort of his son, who breeds him to no useful employment: for indolence is the nurse of vice, the parent of shame, the source of misery. Unfortunately for him, at the same time, Joseph is associated in employment with persons whose conversation was not likely greatly to improve his morals, and whose dispositions towards him did not promise much to promote his happiness; “the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's

“wives;” who, alas! seem to have inherited much more of the spirit of the bond-woman who was their mother, than of the free-man who was their father. What were the particulars of their ill conduct we are not told; but Joseph observed it, was grieved and offended, and reported it to his father.

Jacob is not wholly irreprehensible in this. It was imprudent to trust a well-inclined young man, at that delicately dangerous season of life, far long, out of his sight, and in such company. It was wrong to encourage in Joseph a spirit of censoriousness and self-conceit. It was madness to add fuel to those resentments which his ill-disguised partiality to this son of his old age had already kindled in the breasts of his other children. But his understanding seems quite blinded by love for the boy; and he proceeds from weakness to weakness. As if he had not raised up enemies enough to him by countenancing in him the odious character of tale-bearer, he goes on to expose him to the hatred of all the family by dressing up his darling in “a coat of many colours.” What a foundation of mischief was here laid! The brothers must have been much less inflammable than they were well known to be, not to have taken fire at this indiscreet, this ridiculous distinction; and Joseph himself must have possessed a mind much more firm and more enlightened than seventeen generally discovers, not to have felt at least some transient emotions of vanity, insolence, and self-sufficiency, in being thus favoured above the

rest. The father was, therefore, injurious to all, but most to himself. His house is now in flames, and he himself fired the train.

Parents, as you love your repose, as you value your children, as you would have them dwell together in unity, as you would not put a dagger into a brother's hand to shed a brother's blood, guard yourselves well against partial affections: or, if un-
warily you have conceived them, conceal it from every eye, let not the favourite see it, let not his rival suspect it. Let reason, let religion, let that very partiality itself teach you to be wise and just. Parents, as you prize the understanding, the virtue, the true dignity of your children, let them never be taught to think that dress confers consequence, that finery implies worth, that the body deserves more attention than the mind. Let not even your daughters be led, through your silly vanity, to believe that any part of their excellence consists in the splendour of their appearance; but still inculcate upon them that a mind stored with the virtues of modesty, meekness, gentleness, patience, humility, is both to God and man a sight infinitely more pleasing, than the most beautiful person adorned with jewels and lace, if these, or any one of these, be wanting. Let them know early and hear frequently, that cleanliness and decency are virtues which they ought to acquire and to practise; but that a curiously ornamented body is, to a discerning eye, nothing but the indication, and the wretched tawdry covering, of a naked soul.

Do we not see the ill effect of Jacob's fondness on Joseph himself? What could have suggested those dreams of his own superiority, the recital of which was so offensive to his brothers, and which drew from his father himself check and reproof? It must have been the petulancy of his waking thoughts, buoyed up by confidence in paternal preference and favour. It will be said, that they were intimations from above of his future greatness and eminence. It is readily admitted. But of what stuff does the foreknowledge and power of God frame prognostics and predictions? Sometimes, perhaps often, of the violent propensities and desires of mens' own minds; and many events seem to have been predicted not because they are to come to pass, but they come to pass because they have been predicted. ➤

The dreams themselves are the natural working of a young mind inflated by indulgence. The repetition of them, where they were sure to occasion disgust, marks a simplicity, an innocence, a boyish thoughtlessness and indiscretion, which it were cruel severely to censure, but which wisdom can by no means approve. And the whole taken together, the prognostic with the realization, the cause with the effect, the prophecy with the event, form a wonderful and instructive contrast of the weakness of man and the power of God; of the meanness of the materials and the magnificence of the fabric; of the feebleness of the instrument and the force of the hand which employed it.

Though Jacob was not altogether pleased with the spirit which these dreams, and the rehearsal of them, discovered, yet they had a very different effect upon him, from what they had upon his sons. They envied and hated him the more; he “ob-served the saying.” Whether from a father’s partial fondness, or instructed by that Spirit who afterwards disclosed futurity to him, down to the gathering of the people to *Shiloh*, he considered the doubling of the vision, and its coinciding purport, as portending something great and good to his beloved child; and he sits down patiently to wait the issue. And, as we shall presently find, it was hastening towards its conclusion in a course much more rapid, and by means much more extraordinary, than any which he could possibly have apprehended.

By this time the power of Jacob’s family was grown so great, or the terror inspired by the cruel murder of the Shechemites was so far effaced, that his ten eldest sons adventure into the neighbourhood of that city, to feed their flocks. The distance from *Beersheba*, where Jacob dwelt, being considerable, their absence being extended to a length of time that created anxiety, and though *their* apprehensions might, a solicitous father’s anxiety not being quite laid to rest, he thinks proper to send Joseph from Hebron to inquire after their welfare, and to bring him word again. Unhappy father and son! Little did they think the parting of that day was to be for such a length of duration. Blind that we are to futurity! We “cannot tell what a day

“ may bring forth.” The last meeting, the last parting ; the last coming in and going out ; the last time of speaking and of hearing ; the last of every thing must soon overtake us all. Joseph, accordingly, leaves his father’s house, never, never, to return to it more ; and goes forth in quest of his brethren.

Our tender affections are now strongly excited for the hapless youth. We behold a youth of seventeen, who had never till now been from beneath the protection of paternal care and tenderness, whose face “ the wind of heaven ” had never hitherto “ visited too roughly,” whose spirit mortification had never galled, whose heart affliction had never yet pierced,—thrown at once into the wide world, missing his way in an unknown country, exposed to savage beasts, or more savage men, coming at length to the place of his destination, but disappointed of finding what he looked for there : and, finally, falling into the hands of butchers where he expected brothers. If ever there were an object of compassion it is now before us. I observe his young heart flutter with joy when, after all his wanderings and anxieties, he descries his brothers, and their tents, and their flocks, afar off. I see the tear of tenderness rush to his eyes while he delivers his father’s greeting, and tells the tale of his own youthful scrowns and mistakes on the road. I see his blooming countenance flushed with delight and satisfaction, at the thought of being again among friends, of having once more a protector. Ah cruel,

cruel disappointment? They have been plotting his ruin, they have devoted him to death. He comes to them with words of peace, with kind and affectionate inquiries after their health and prosperity: They meet him with looks of aversion, with words of contempt and hatred, with thoughts of blood.

The history of Jacob's family exhibits a shocking view of manners and of society at that period. They digest and execute a plan of murder, with as much coolness, as we would an improvement in agriculture or an adventure in trade. It is no wonder that the poor Shechemites found no pity at their hands, when they are so lost to the feelings of nature, humanity, and filial duty, as to deliberate and determine, without ceremony or remorse, upon their own brother's death. The trifling incident of the dreams lies rankling in their bosoms; "Behold," say they, "this *dreamer* cometh."

Well has our blessed Lord cautioned his disciples against the use of contemptuous expressions one to another; for however slight and insignificant a hard or ridiculous name at first sight may appear, it proceeds from an unkind heart, and it partakes of the nature of murder. It is no uncommon thing for men who have quite got over every scruple of conscience, and all sense of duty, still to retain some regard to decency; and to respect opinion and appearances, after the heart is become perfectly callous. Though they can remorselessly resolve on shedding blood, they have not confidence enough to avow their violence and ~~barbarity~~ ^{barbarity}, but craft and

falsehood must be called in to cover their villany from the eye of the world. "Come now, therefore, and let us slay him; and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams." That there should have been one of the ten capable of conceiving, and of suggesting such a deed of horror, had been wonderful: but that only one of the ten should rise up to intercede for the unhappy victim exceeds all belief. We almost lose the remembrance of Reuben's filthiness in his good-natured attempt to save his brother. If there were something of deceit in the proposal which he made to the rest for this purpose, it was on the side of virtue, and calls, at least, for pardon, if not for commendation.

Joseph was now at hand; and how different his reception from what he fondly expected! "They stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him. And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it." With truth has the wise man said, "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." The demons of envy and revenge have taken possession of their hearts; in vain he weeps, in vain he prays, in vain employs the tender names of father and brother to win their pity. The coat, the odious coat, the badge of a partial father's fondness, steels their breasts: they strip it off with more of savage joy, than ever the doting parent felt of satisfaction in seeing him put it on,

or the hapless youth himself in wearing it. The horror of being cast alive into a pit, to perish with hunger, is not to be conceived, much less expressed. What must it then have been to a heart like Joseph's, tremblingly alive to the keenest sensations of pain; acquainted, till then, only with gentleness and indulgence, and now dreadfully awakened to perceive the full extent of his misery? Instant death had been mercy to one in such a situation.

As if they had done nothing wrong, they sit down unconcernedly "to eat bread." Savage monsters! could the moderate cravings of their own appetite fail to remind them of the wretched state of their poor brother, could it fail to suggest the misery of perishing for want, could it fail to awaken compassion in some gentle bosom? No, with his piercing shrieks yet sounding in their ears, with his piteous supplicating looks yet before their eyes, they indulge the commonest, lowest cravings of their own nature, and calmly consign him to a lingering death, the bitterness of which was every instant increased by the slowness of its approach. And now behold the darling of Jacob on the very brink of despair; when Providence, wiser than they were cunning, and more powerful than they were wicked, interposes for his deliverance.

It was so ordered of Heaven that a travelling company, or caravan, of Ishmaelitish merchants passed by while they were at dinner, in the course of their traffic to Egypt. A thought occurred to Judah, whose heart it appears now began somewhat to re-

lent, that an opportunity offered of ridding themselves of their hated rival without incurring the guilt of shedding his blood; namely, that of selling him for a slave to the Ishmaelites, who he knew would carry him along with them into Egypt, sell him over again for profit, and thereby for ever prevent the possibility of his return, to detect their villany, and to renew his pretensions to superiority over them. No sooner was this proposal made, than it was assented to; and they who a little while before made nothing of taking away their brother's life, with less scruple and ceremony still take upon them to rob him of his liberty; and, as if he had been a bullock or a kid from the flock, sell him for twenty pieces of silver into the hands of strangers.

Mark the wonder-working hand of God! The circumstances which lately seemed to poor Joseph so untoward and unfavourable, were working together for the preservation of his life, and were paving the way to glory. Had he not wandered in the field, his arrival had happened too early for the passing by of those merchants to save him; had he found his brethren in Shechem, as he expected, instead of Dothan, he had been out of the track which his deliverers took. "Who can tell what is good or evil for a man," till the end come and the mystery of Providence be unfolded? These, to the eye of man, are little accidental circumstances; but they are a part of a vast arrangement, made by him "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," to bring about a great purpose.

There are wheels almost imperceptible in the great machine, which the untutored eye is apt wholly to overlook, but which are, in truth, as necessary to motion as the largest and the most conspicuous.

Thus was the jewel of his father's heart vilely bartered away as a thing of little value. Behold Joseph in the hands of the descendants of him, whose "hands were against every man, and every man's hands against him," and he is safer with wild Ishmaelites than with bloody unnatural brothers. From avarice, if not from pity or affection, they will treat him kindly, that they may dispose of him to advantage. So much better is a merciful, or even a mercenary stranger, than an envious and cruel brother.

Reuben, it appears, was not present at this consultation, bargain, and delivery. He probably stole away, when the rest sat down to meat, that by a round-about path he might arrive at the pit where Joseph was hid, and assist him in effecting his escape while the rest were otherwise employed: but he had made so large a circuit, in order to avoid suspicion, that the sale was transacted before he came to the place, and his benevolent intention was thereby frustrated. He is the only one of the brothers who seems to have felt a single spark of pity for the unfortunate youth, or of concern for the distress of his aged parent. What then must his anguish have been, when he came to the pit, and found no Joseph there? From his worst fears, however, he is soon relieved, and, bad as it was, he rejoices to

hear that Joseph was only sold for a slave. By common consent it is agreed to conceal, if possible, the whole of this dark scene. They must meet their father again, and to him something must be said for the non-appearance of his amiable, his beloved son. I am not more shocked at their first purpose of blood, than at their artful device to cover it, and their awful steadiness and fidelity to each other, in guarding so well the dreadful secret. It proves what deep, what determined, what thorough-paced villains they were. And from such men as those does the Jewish nation glory to have sprung. They stain the variegated coat, the cause of so much jealousy, with blood; which they intend shall pass with the wretched father for the blood of him who wore it; and they send it to Hebron, as accidentally found in the field in that state, to carry its own doleful tidings along with it.

Who can bear to accompany this fatal pledge to the place of its destination? Who can bear to witness the anguish of a miserable old man sinking under the weight of accumulated woe. All his former griefs admitted of consolation: they were more directly from the hand of God, they were in the course of nature, they might be cured or endured; but this stab was mortal; it defied medicine, it mocked at length of time. He himself has had the principal hand in this great evil; and I fear, I fear, he suspects the truth, though he says it not. Beautiful, too much beloved, ill-starred Rachel! once we pitied, now we congratulate thee. A gra-

cious Providence has in kindness taken thee away from the evil to come. The sight of Joseph's vesture dipped in blood must have proved fatal to thee, hadst thou lived to that day; to have lived till now must have been to endure pangs more frightful than the agonizing throes of child-birth, or the last dying struggles of dissolving nature. We hasten from a scene which the heart is unable long to contemplate, to land Joseph safely in Egypt,—where being arrived, he is transferred, like a bundle of spicery, from the Midianites to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.

And here we stop. And here in the hands of that God who “delivered him from the paw of the lion and the bear,” we deposit this precious trust, confident of its being restored, like all that we commit to God, increased in value, importance, and utility. If the subject be as pleasing to you, as it is to me, I shall hope to have the pleasure of resuming it with you next Lord's day.

—JESUS, the well beloved Son of GOD, came from his Father's house above, to bring to us, his brethren after the flesh, the gentle and affectionate commendations of his Father's love. Instead of welcome he met with reproach and scorn. “He came to his own, and his own received him not.” “He was despised and rejected of men.” “His familiar friend in whom he trusted, which did eat of his bread, lifted up his heel against him.” Judas, one of his own house, sold him for thirty pieces of silver. He was stripped of his vesture, his

raiment was stained with blood. "He looked, and
"there was none to help." "He trod the wine-press
"alone." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and
"separate from sinners." "He was brought as a
"lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her
"shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."
"It became him, for whom are all things, and by
"whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto
"glory, to make the captain of their salvation per-
"fect through sufferings." Men "thought evil
"against him, but God meant it unto good, to
"bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much
"people alive." "The counsel of the Lord standeth
"for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."
To the attentive reader of the Scriptures, these, and
many such applications as these, of the History of
Joseph, to the person, the character, the office and
undertaking of the Messiah, will readily occur.
To the careless and unbelieving, more has been said
than they will understand, regard, or approve. We
commend them to the mercy of God, and we
implore a blessing on what has been spoken, for
Christ's sake. Amen.

LECTURE III.

GENESIS XXXIX. 2—6.

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man ; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him : and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass, from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake ; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand ; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat : and Joseph was a goodly person, and well-favoured.

UNLESS “ the heart be established by grace,” in prosperity it will be elated above measure, and in adversity it will be ready to sink under the weight of its woe. A principle of religion preserves the balance of the soul, and guards it equally from rising into insolence and from falling into dejection. It has been disputed whether prosperity or adversity be the severer trial of the two. In order to determine this question it is necessary to know the character of the party who is tried. In some persons we meet with a stupidity, an insensibility of nature, on which change of circumstances makes no apparent impression. This endeavours to pass upon itself,

and actually does pass upon a superficial observer, for moderation in success and patience in affliction. But the rock is not patient because, without murmuring, it bears the incessant dashing of the raging sea; neither does the snail deserve the praise of humility because it attempts not to fly. That moderation is estimable which, awake to all the advantages of rank, and fortune, and success, offends not God by levity and ingratitude, nor man by haughtiness and pride. That patience merits admiration and praise, which feels yet complains not; which sighs yet submits.

It is very natural for men to flatter themselves that they could support prosperity with wisdom and propriety; but experience will evince, that while success tends to relax, weaken, and extinguish the religious principle, calamity, by teaching us our own weakness and dependance, awakens, strengthens, and keeps it alive. The lot of most men, alternately, furnishes occasion for exercise in both ways. It is the office of genuine and solid piety to instruct us "in whatever state we are therewith to be content;" "to exercise men unto godliness, which is profitable unto all things, having the promise both of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."

The amiable and illustrious person, on whose History we entered in the last Lecture, and which we are now to continue, affords a shining and affecting example of a mind unsubdued by the deepest distress, and uncorrupted by the

highest degree of elevation. His affliction commenced at an early period of life ; it was, of its kind, peculiarly bitter and severe ; it came from a quarter whence it was least to be apprehended ; and the transition was instantaneous, from a tranquillity and indulgence which knew no bound, to anguish which no language can express, no imagination conceive. As he was to be an eminent type of Him who “ as “ a sheep before her shearers is dumb, not opening “ her mouth,” Scripture represents Joseph quietly submitting to the barbarous treatment of his brothers ; as patiently doomed to perish of hunger in an empty pit, and sold into slavery to the Ishmaelites, without arguing, without upbraiding, without repining.

Were it possible to form a stronger idea of the obduracy of Jacob’s sons than that which their cruelty to Joseph affords, it is to see them the calm witnesses of the anguish of their father’s soul, without being moved by all his misery and tears to divulge the important secret, and to pour into the fond paternal heart the cordial balm, which the knowledge even of his son’s being a slave in Egypt would have administered ; for a dawn of hope would thence have arisen, that by some blessed revolution of events, the precious hour might, perhaps, at length arrive, which should restore him to his father again. How dreadful it is to embark on a sea of vice ! To return is difficult, if not impossible : to proceed is ruin.

Joseph meanwhile lives and prospers in a strange land. He has not lost all, he has lost nothing, who

enjoys the divine presence and favour. The amiable youth is indeed from under the shadow of his father's wing, but the protection of Heaven is not withdrawn, "the Almighty is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." A young man brought up like him in fulness, in liberty, in indulgence and ease, might have been supposed sullen and stubborn under a change of condition so sudden, and so severe, or to have sunk into melancholy and despair. But with Joseph it was not so. With true magnanimity and spirit he cheerfully accommodates his mind to his situation, and without murmur or reluctance addresses himself to the discharge of his duty, as a diligent and faithful servant.

We have not power over our lot to carve it out as we please, but the mind has power over itself; and happiness has its seat in the mind, not in external circumstances. The favourite son of Israel seems degraded and dishonoured, even when raised to the first rank of servitude in Potiphar's house; but Joseph, pious, modest, wise, and faithful, is equally respectable, whether as a son or as a servant. Never did Potiphar make so fortunate a purchase. The blessing of God enters into his house from the moment that Joseph becomes a member of the family. In many various ways are servants curses or comforts to those with whom they dwell. Let a servant have a principle of conscience, and you have a certain pledge of his fidelity; divest him of that, and where is your security that either your property or your person is safe in his hands? Joseph

demeaned himself as a good servant, and Potiphar as a wise and a kind master. In vain do we look for affection and attachment in our inferiors, if we treat them with insolence, unkindness, or neglect. The great and affluent are much more in the power of, much more dependant upon, their meanest domestics, than they are willing to understand or to acknowledge. And surely it is much more prudent to secure their affection as humble friends, by condescension and good-nature, than to provoke their resentment or revenge by pride and severity.

Joseph has been faithful over a few things, he is made ruler over many things; "he made him "overseer over his house, and all that he had he put "into his hand." His personal accomplishments keep pace with his mental endowments, "he was a "goodly person, and well-favoured." Beauty, like every other gift of nature, is good of itself, and therefore to be received with thankfulness. But alas, how often does it prove a snare to the possessor, and a temptation to others! This quality of Joseph's had like to have proved more fatal to him than even the envy of his brothers. This last threatened only his body, but that endangers the soul. The one sold him into bondage, the other would have plunged him into dishonour. His master's wife looks upon him with eyes of unhallowed affection, and attempts to make him a partaker of her impurity. To expatiate on the nature of this temptation would be as indecent as it is unnecessary. It is a fearful example of the dreadful length which

the human mind is capable of going when the restraints of shame are once broken through.

Some kinds of temptation are boldly to be encountered, and resolutely overcome. There are others only to be conquered by flight, and disarmed by removing to a distance. Joseph dwells only on one circumstance in order to settle and determine his conduct—the all-seeing eye of God, and the danger of offending him; “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Pleasure, and interest, and passion, blind the eyes; but conscience with scrupulous attention always and every where reveres an omnipresent Jehovah. The lower principles of our nature respect and are regulated by consequences; this great principle is moved only by a sense of right and wrong. Interest and desire are contented with inquiring, “Is there no danger of being detected?” But conscience is only to be satisfied by ascertaining “whether it be sin or duty.”

The consequence to Joseph was such as might be expected from the temper of a shameless woman, false, lascivious, and resentful. The dæmon of lust changed into those of rage and revenge; she accuses of an attempt to seduce her, the man whom no consideration of pleasure or of advantage could for a moment seduce from the right path. This accusation, however false, being uncontradicted, is admitted as true, and Joseph, as the reward of faithfulness almost without example, is immured in close custody, to be dragged forth at a proper opportunity, to still severer punishment. And here

again we have a fresh instance of the greatness of his mind. He chooses rather to incur his master's groundless displeasure, and to sink under the weight of a false accusation, than to vindicate his own honour by exposing the shame of a bad woman; and he leaves the clearing up of his character, and the preservation of his life, to that God with whom he had entrusted still higher concerns, those of his immortal soul. And thus, the least assuming, the shame-faced, feminine virtues, temperance, and chastity, and innocence, and self-government, are found in company with the most manly, the most heroic qualities, intrepidity, constancy, and contempt of death.

No place is frightful to a good man but the dungeon of an ill conscience. Free from that, Joseph is at large though in prison. It is the favour or displeasure of God, that makes this or the other spot comfortable or irksome. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" but to the guilty, the whole world is a place of confinement. God, who delivered him out of the pit, accompanies him also to the prison; and what heart is there so savage that goodness cannot mollify, what nature so obdurate that the power of the Almighty cannot reach? The profession of a gaoler is unfriendly to benevolence: it is a character which implies sternness and severity. But whether this man were formed of gentler clay, or whether the meekness and modesty of Joseph had wrought even upon a rocky heart; or whether Providence specially in-

terposed to further its own deep designs, so it is, we find our good young man in high favour with his keeper. Wherever we find Joseph,—in Potiphar's house, in prison, or at court, we find a man faithful, and diligent, and trusty; and we find a man honoured, esteemed, and confided in by all with whom he had any connexion. Let a man be inflexibly honest and true, and he will never have reason to accuse the world of want of confidence. But it is no wonder if the dishonest knave find men full of doubt and suspicion. As his master's house before, so the prison now prospers on Joseph's account. The world is not always sensible of its obligation to the presence of good men. But Sodom was in a fearful state the moment that righteous Lot went out of it; and when the people of God, the salt of the earth, are all removed from it, the end of the world cannot be at a great distance.

By a strange concurrence of circumstances, which the divine Providence alone could have brought together, Joseph has for his fellow prisoners two of the chief officers of the king of Egypt, who had fallen under their master's displeasure, and who had been for some time in confinement, uncertain of their doom. The great God is whetting his instruments, making his arrangements, marshalling his forces, at very different times, and in very different places. The envy of Jacob's sons, the lasciviousness of Potiphar's wife, the disobedience of Pharaoh's servants, the anger of the king himself—all, all meet, strange to think! in one

point, the elevation of Joseph to the right hand of the throne. Remove but one link and the chain is broken asunder. Take away but a single stone and the fabric falls to the ground. But "this work" and counsel is of God, and therefore it cannot be "overthrown." "He willeth, and none can let it."

It is not at all surprising that he who had been preparing his work, in places, and in minds, so remote from, so unlike to, and so unconnected with; each other, should bring it to a conclusion by means somewhat uncommon and supernatural. It happened that, in one and the same night, the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh dreamed each a dream, which laid fast hold of their minds and memory; and being men, like other Egyptians, strongly tinctured with superstition, and at that time in circumstances which peculiarly disposed them to receive superstitious impressions, their spirits are considerably affected by the vision of the night, not doubting that it portended the speedy approach of some great good or evil. Joseph attending them in the morning, in the course of his duty, observed the deep concern which was engraved on their countenances: and, sympathy being always one of the native effusions of an honest heart, he kindly inquires into the cause of it.

By the way, How pleasant is it to observe this excellent young person, with so much cheerfulness and good-nature, performing the humble offices of a gaoler's servant? He had been accustomed to be waited upon, to be ministered ~~unto~~; but duty calls,

and with alacrity he ministers to the necessity of others.

But what do we see? An under-gaoler starting up, all at once, into an interpreter of dreams, possessing a sagacity which reaches into futurity, directed and taught by a Spirit, whose piercing eye penetrates into eternity, and discerns all the wonders of the world unknown! How much wiser; how much more noble, how much more excellent are they who live in communion with God, than other men! For though they do not all attain the gift of prophecy, the gift of working miracles, the gift of speaking with tongues, yet they all are dignified by the spirit of prayer, the spirit of adoption, "the spirit of faith, and of love, and of a "sound mind."

Joseph, from the different complexion of their several dreams, and inspired no doubt by Wisdom from above, predicts their approaching doom; the speedy restoration of the one to his former trust and dignity, and a sudden and ignominious death to the other. Nothing but inspiration could have borne Joseph through a declaration so bold and so decisive, and which was to be brought to the awful test of confirmation or disappointment, in so short a space as three days. So confident is he of the certainty of his interpretation, that he founds all his hopes of enlargement upon it. And there is something inexpressibly tender and pathetic in his application to the chief butler to that effect, "But "think on me when it shall be well with thee, and

“ show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make
“ mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out
“ of this house. For indeed I was stolen away out
“ of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have
“ I done nothing, that they should put me into a
“ dungeon.”

The event justified the prediction; and it presents an awful and affecting illustration of the observation of the wise man, “ The king’s heart is in the hand
“ of the Lord: as the rivers of water, he turneth it
“ whithersoever he will.” A youth, a stranger, a prisoner, could have no power over the councils of Pharaoh. But the power which controls all the potentates of the earth, and which marshals the whole host of Heaven, is bringing his own word to pass, and is performing his own pleasure.

The chief butler, we may suppose, readily promised Joseph his best services when he should be again restored to place and power; but, like a true courtier, he thinks no more of his promise nor of his fellow-prisoner, after his own turn was served. So selfish, so thoughtless, so ungrateful is man! Had he been under no personal obligation to the young stranger, for his tender assiduities while in confinement, and for the agreeable and certain intelligence which he received from him of his approaching deliverance, common humanity, awakened by the simple tale of innocence and misery which he had told, ought to have prompted his immediate and most earnest exertions in his behalf; and yet he suffers two full years to ~~linger~~ away, without

caring to reflect whether such a person existed or no. And when he thinks of him at last, it is not the generous recollection of kindness and attachment; but the selfish remembrance of courtly adulation, eager to gratify his prince, but not to rescue talents, and innocence, and worth from unmerited oppression. Pharaoh hanged him not for his offences against his prince; but for his forgetfulness and ingratitude to Joseph, let him be hung up as an object of detestation and contempt to all future generations of mankind.

How very differently do God and men frequently judge of one and the same object! If there be in all Egypt a person more forlorn and inconsiderable than another, it is an Hebrew slave in a dungeon. But “God raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes.” Pharaoh himself now begins to act a part in this wonderful drama; for kings, in the hand of God, are only instruments of an higher order and of more extensive operation. Kings are liable to hunger and thirst like other men; kings must sleep, and may be disturbed by dreams, like other men; and thus it happened to the mighty sovereign of Egypt. With vision upon vision, in one night, was his rest troubled, the strange coincidence and mysterious import of which greatly perplex his waking thoughts. In a country teeming with gods, and over-run with superstition, no circumstance was overlooked which any how seemed to portend a future event. No wonder then that

the prince, who has not always the best informed, nor the firmest mind, of any within his dominions, should be rendered uneasy by a repetition of dreams, so singular in themselves, so similar to, and yet so unlike, one another. It is not less wonderful, that in a country so prolific of magicians and soothsayers, no one should be found bold enough to affix a meaning, or to guess at an interpretation. Was it that the true God confounded and silenced their vain imaginations, or that Pharaoh, dissatisfied with their idle conjectures, and prompted from above to make farther enquiry, rejected the usual modes of solution, in order that, heaven-directed, Joseph might emerge out of obscurity, to save a great nation, to preserve his father's house in famine, and to fulfil the prediction and the promise made to Abraham concerning the future fortunes of his posterity.

The king's perturbation necessarily interests and affects the whole court. And then, for the first time, the chief butler bethinks himself of his faults, and of his promise, and of his obligations to his fellow-prisoner; and relates, in the hearing of the king, the very extraordinary circumstances of his own imprisonment and enlargement; of his dream, the interpretation, and the issue; and, of consequence, is led to mention the character and situation of the interpreter. This instantly effects for Joseph, what his friendship, had it been exerted, perhaps would not have produced—an immediate order to set the prisoner free, and to bring him without delay into the royal presence. When men

can be subservient to the interest, the pleasure, or the ambition of princes, they are in the sure road to preferment; and a man often is more indebted for success to a fortunate incident, than to a righteous cause. Joseph's affairs are now in a train such as his warmest friends could wish; and again we see another saying of the wise man verified: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." Pharaoh's expectations are not disappointed. He relates his dreams, and God, the author of the visions, and who had sent the interpreter and the explanation by the mouth of Joseph, unfolds its meaning and import. Pharaoh's dream had puzzled himself and all Egypt, by its first aspect, but now that it is explained, how easy, how simple, how applicable, how natural every thing appears! The greatest discoveries, after they are made, appear so obvious and so plain, that every one is ready to wonder he did not hit upon it first: and this instead of diminishing greatly enhances the merit of the first discoverer. Upon the manifestation of the import of Pharaoh's redoubled vision, it is found, that God, who had given formerly to two of the servants an intimation of their approaching fate, was now giving to the sovereign, a premonition of the visitations of his Providence, to this great, populous, and wealthy empire. A previous notice of good renders it a double blessing; a warning of evil prepares us to meet it, and thereby diminishes its pressure.

Joseph's interpretation carried conviction along with it, and Pharaoh immediately resolves to act upon it. There is a certain undescrivable charm in true wisdom, in unaffected goodness, which forces approbation, and which carries the heart captive at once. There is a native dignity in virtue which, while it never assumes nor pushes itself forwards, is never timorous, embarrassed, or awkward. Joseph possesses unaffected ease and composure in the presence of Pharaoh, and of all his court; and the court on this occasion, we have reason to think, was a very splendid, public, and crowded one. So good a thing it is to have the heart established by the fear of God. It casts out every other fear. But the days of his depression are now ended, and every step which he has trod through this valley of humiliation is a progress made to the glory that follows. And here we pause, having conducted Joseph to the right hand of the throne; and beholding him ready to mount the second chariot, while admiring nations proclaim before him, "Bow the knee."

The next Lecture will exhibit the son of Jacob in all the splendour of high life, armed with the authority of a minister of state, possessing a plenitude of power over the whole kingdom of Egypt.

Turn for a moment from Joseph, and behold a greater than he is. "The Prince of this world came, and found nothing in him." Temptation, "addressed to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," had from his lips an instant repulse, "It is written, it is written." "In

“ his humiliation, his judgment was taken away ;” He suffered as a malefactor, though “ he did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips.” He was condemned, and put to death upon a false accusation. From the triumphant ignominy of the cross, he dispenses life and death to his fellow-sufferers, Paradise to the one, everlasting shame to the other. “ Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him ?” “ The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” “ No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him.” “ He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” “ Fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?” “ To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” “ Be

“ thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a
 “ crown of life.” I conclude all in the words of
 the beloved Disciple, who thus describes a more
 august vision than Pharaoh ever beheld: “ And I
 “ beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and
 “ of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders,
 “ stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven
 “ horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits
 “ of God sent forth into all the earth. And they
 “ sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to
 “ take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for
 “ thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by
 “ thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and
 “ people, and nation; and hast made us unto our
 “ God kings and priests: and we shall reign on
 “ the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice
 “ of many angels round about the throne, and the
 “ beasts, and the elders: and the number of them
 “ was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thou-
 “ sands of thousands; saying with a loud voice,
 “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive
 “ power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and
 “ honour, and glory, and blessing. And every
 “ creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth,
 “ and under the earth, and such as are in the sea,
 “ and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Bless-
 “ ing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that
 “ sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for
 “ ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen.
 “ And the four and twenty elders fell down and
 “ worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” : :

LECTURE IV.

GENESIS XLI. 38—44.

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph; Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck: and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had: and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

IF it be pleasant to observe, in particular instances, the Providence of God justifying its own procedure, by relieving and vindicating oppressed innocence, or by precipitating prosperous guilt from its lofty seat; what must be the satisfaction and delight of beholding the whole plan of Providence unfolded, every mystery in the divine conduct explained, and all the ways of God to men completely vindicated! A very considerable part of our present distress arises from hastiness and impatience of spirit. We are for

rushing to the end at once ; we will not afford our Maker and Ruler leisure to open his own designs, and to illustrate his own meaning. We would have the work of Heaven performed in our way ; we have settled the whole order of things in our own minds ; and all is wrong that ignorance, fretfulness, and presumption are pleased to dislike. Cloudy, rainy weather is much less agreeable than serenity ; yet it requires but a moment's reflection to be convinced, that eternal sunshine would be the reverse of a blessing to mankind. Now the alternate succession of day and night, of fair weather and rain, have not greater beauty and utility in the world of nature, than the successive shades of adversity, and the sunbeams of prosperity, which appear on the face of the moral world.

Of this unceasing succession or mixture, the lot of individuals, the fortune of nations, the state of the globe, perhaps the system of the universe, are composed. Nothing is permitted to continue too long ; no being is suffered to go too far out of his station. The balance eternally depends from the hand of a being possessed of infinite wisdom ; and, after a few slight vibrations, the scales speedily bring each other into equilibrium again. The swelling of a wave, the rolling of a ship, nay, the finger of a child may for a moment derange the compass, but after trembling an instant or two from point to point, immediately the needle resumes its steady, stated northern direction.

If there be in history a passage, which more than

another encourages us patiently and submissively to wait for the end, to follow and submit to the conduct of Providence, it is the story of Joseph the son of Jacob. What man of humanity would have refused to lend his helping hand to rescue the innocent youth from the fury of his unnatural brothers, to pull him up out of the pit, and to restore him to his father again? Who would not gladly have sacrificed a part of his substance to purchase his release from Egyptian servitude? What friend to truth and virtue but would have rejoiced to vindicate his character from the vile aspersions of his infamous mistress, and to save him from undeserved punishment? What heart, alive to the feelings of gratitude, but would have seconded the application of "the chief butler" for his immediate enlargement? But all this would have been precipitate, rash, and absurd. His fond father himself could not have conducted his favourite son to the honours which he attained, by a way so certain, so safe, and so honourable. Whether we regard Joseph himself, or the interests of his father's family, or the welfare of Egypt, or the good of the human race, Providence, when we come to the issue, it is found, has secured, promoted, and succeeded them all, in its own wise and gracious method, infinitely better than they possibly could have been by all the sagacity and foresight of man.

By the wonderful steps then, which we have seen, behold Joseph exalted to the right hand of Pharaoh, and made lord over all Egypt. Behold

the lives, the conduct, the liberties, the property of millions, entrusted to his care, and subjected to his authority. Behold him married to a princess, arrayed in vestures of fine linen, a gold chain about his neck, the royal signet in his hands, riding through the land in the second chariot, while admiring nations bow the knee before him. Behold the dream which boyish vanity, perhaps, at first suggested, which fraternal jealousy so keenly reprobated and so sternly avenged, which a father's wisdom was constrained to check and reprove, and which incredulity, no doubt, would treat as the idle chimera of a disturbed imagination, is verified and brought to pass. When we observe so many of the important events of Joseph's life turning upon the hinge of dreams, and their interpretation, we are taught to think respectfully of every method by which God is pleased to communicate the knowledge of his will to mankind. And when our own dreams, as they sometimes do, either call us to duty, or convince us of sin; when they recall to our memory what is past, or admonish us of what is to come, so that we may profit thereby, we ought to consider them as warnings from Heaven, and as the voice of God; but to attend to, and seek a meaning in, every wandering of a sleeping fancy, is silly and childish; and to suffer them, of whatever complexion they may be, to influence the conduct of life, so as to induce us to neglect duty, to vex and disquiet ourselves, or to disturb others, is absurd, superstitious, and wicked.

There are three particulars in this part of the history of Joseph which have exercised the learning and ingenuity of Critics and Commentators. First, Whether the Hebrew word, *Abrech*, translated into our version, "Bow the knee," had not better have been rendered, as the word will bear, "tender father;" an appellation descriptive of his office and character; dignity and gentleness united.

Secondly, it is inquired, What is the exact import of the name which Pharaoh gave to Joseph upon his promotion? It was customary for eastern princes and nations, to distinguish, by new titles, persons who had rendered themselves illustrious by superior abilities, or by splendid and important actions, as in the case of Daniel and the three other children of the captivity. That which was given to Joseph, according to some, is an Egyptian expression, which signifies "Saviour of the World," and this, if just, conveys a high idea of the importance which the king ascribed to Joseph's information and advice. Others contend that it signifies no more than "revealer, or expounder, of secrets." This last interpretation has the most numerous, perhaps the most respectable support. —

The third particular alluded to involves in it something like a censure of Joseph, as hurried away by motives of ambition and pride, to form an improper and dangerous matrimonial connection, with an idolatrous woman, nay the daughter of a man who by profession, as priest of *On*, or *Helio- polis*, the city of the Sun, was concerned to sup-

port and promote an idolatrous worship. The critics who advance and maintain this opinion, represent Joseph as a mere time-serving sycophant, imbibing in a moment the spirit and manners of a court, and sacrificing principle to conveniency. I confess myself so partial to this amiable and excellent man, that without hesitation I undertake to meet this charge; and would allege in his behalf, That as the Spirit of God no where reprehends this conduct, which in cases deserving blame is done freely and without reserve, so we ought not, without just cause and perfect knowledge, to find fault: charity obliging us "to think no evil," where we can think well, and to put the best construction on what is doubtful, and to judge of what is not clear and explicit by that which is. When I see Providence blessing this union by the birth of two sons, raised in process of time to a double rank of dignity and importance in Israel, it is impossible to think uncharitably of the union itself, which was the origin of that blessing. What, did Joseph acknowledge God so closely in every thing, even to the very naming of his children, correspondently to the aspects of the divine Providence towards him, and can we suppose that he neglected God in a matter of so much higher consequence? Let us rather say, and say it without reserve, that the piety, the chastity, the fidelity, the self-government of Joseph, in flying from an illicit commerce with his master's wife, was thus rewarded of heaven, by a virtuous and lasting union with a chaste virgin, and a prince's

daughter. But we dwell too long on a vindication which was perhaps altogether unnecessary. To proceed :

Joseph has arrived at a station of very high honour, but it is not, to him, a post of emolument and ease merely ; and we must rejoice to see the same person who diligently and humanely served the gaoler as a deputy, and who faithfully managed the affairs of Potiphar as a steward, attentively, humbly, industriously conducting the interests of a great king, and of a mighty empire, as a minister of state. On which I found an observation frequently made already, what matters it how often ? That the fear of God is the best security of a man's good behaviour in every situation ; and that " He " is to be trusted in nothing, who has not a conscience in every thing."

Joseph was but thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh : seventeen of which he had passed under the wing of a fond indulgent parent ; and the other thirteen, at that period of life when the heart is most devoted to pleasure, he had lingered away in all the variety of human wretchedness, but in all the dignity of virtue, in all the superiority of wisdom, in all the delights, pure and sublime, of true piety. And now, at an age when most men are only beginning to reflect and act as reasonable beings, we see him raised, not by accident, by cabal, or by petulance, but by undisputed merit, to a situation, which one part of mankind looks up to with desire, another with awe, and a third with

despair. And happy was it for Egypt, that ever this youth, this stranger, this Hebrew was sold for a slave into its bosom: "God sent him to save much people alive."

Egypt gloried that she was not, like other countries, dependant on the clouds of Heaven for the fertility of her soil, and the exuberance of her crops, but that she derived her rich harvests from the flux and reflux of her own river. But in vain had the Nile arisen to the desired height, during seven successive years of uncommon plenteousness, had not the prophetic foresight of Joseph taught both prince and people to take advantage of the favour of Providence, and to lay a good foundation for the time to come. Nothing do men so much abuse as plenty; nothing do they so soon, and so severely, feel as want of bread. These seven prosperous years seem to compensate, to Joseph, all his former ills; his honour is cleared, his predictions are accomplished. What seldom meets, the sovereign and the subject strive who shall exalt him the most, his domestic felicity keeps pace with the public prosperity, conscience approves, and God, the great God smiles upon him. If there be a condition of humanity to be desired, to be envied, it was this.

Shall we stop to express our surprise, that during all this period, with all the power of Pharaoh in his hand, with a heart so tender, and a spirit so dutiful, he should make no attempt to convey to the wretched old man in Canaan intelligence con-

cerning his preservation, and his present condition. But we must check our surprise when we consider that the whole was of the Lord of Hosts, "who is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." ---

It is worth while to observe how the style of Scripture is adapted to experience, and to the nature of things. Years of tranquillity and success glide away imperceptibly; but every moment of pain is observed and felt, as it halts along. Accordingly, the history of seven prosperous and abundant years is dispatched in a sentence or two; whereas seven years of famine, as they were more sensibly felt in their progress, so they afford more abundant materials to the pen of the historian; and the detail is lengthened out to the reader, in proportion as the distress was to the unhappy sufferers. Little do we think of this in the days of health, and ease, and joy, and therefore little thankful are we to God for our multiplied comforts. To instruct us in their value, he is constrained to put forth his hand, and either to withdraw or to mar them; and we awaken, alas too late, to a sense of our obligations to an indulgent Providence! The seven years of famine are now commenced, and the honour of Joseph's prophetic sagacity is established, but by a very different proof. When either the promises or the threatenings of the word are fulfilled, we have equally a demonstration of the truth and faithfulness of God: venerable is he when he blesses, and venerable when he punishes a guilty world. Happy the prince who circumstanced like Pharaoh, can roll the cares

and anxieties of government upon a minister of ability and integrity like Joseph. Happy the people governed by a ruler, who, himself educated in the school of affliction, has learned to succour the distressed.

The beginning and the progress of scarcity are described in this part of the Sacred History with wonderful exactness and energy. It represents men, first, parting cheerfully with their money for food. By and by they are reduced to part with their lands, their hope and their security for years to come, in exchange for the subsistence of a day. And, at length, reluctantly and slowly we behold them surrendering liberty itself for the support of life.

The neighbouring nations feel, with Egypt, the rod of God's anger; but every neighbouring nation is not blest with a Joseph, capable of foreseeing the evil, and of applying the remedy. Canaan, in common with others, is visited with the general calamity; and Jacob, who lived there, Jacob, the heir of the promise, is ready to perish with his family for lack of food. But he ill understands the promises and the power of God, who, under the pressure of any affliction, trusts to a miracle for relief, when honest and lawful means are in his power.

After an interval of more than thirteen years we revisit poor Jacob's melancholy habitation, and we find him what he was from the beginning, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Behold a wound, which time could not cure, still festering in

his bosom. Behold him sinking into the grave under a load which reason could not alleviate, nor religion itself totally remove. His family, indeed, greatly increased by a multiplicity of grand-children; but that great blessing embittered and converted into a curse, by the dreadful pressure of famine. What a dismal condition! Children crying for bread, and none to give them; the wretched parents looking at their perishing offspring, and then at one another, in silent astonishment and despair. Conscience, which had probably slept quietly in better days, would now, no doubt, awaken the bitter memory of guilt long past, and which they had endeavoured to forget. The sight of their own children ready to die of hunger, could not but revive the dreadful recollection of the time when, in cold blood, they resolved to starve a brother, an innocent brother, to death.

In Jacob himself we behold a moving and instructive picture of every child of God, and of that church whereof he was then a living head and representative; "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." He "heard there was corn in Egypt." He had silver and gold in abundance; despondency was only adding to the evil; he therefore rouses his astonished sons from their lethargy and dejection, and proposes a journey into Egypt to buy food. There is no necessity so cogent as that of eating. It eagerly catches, therefore, at every prospect of relief; it

believes things incredible, and attempts things impossible. The ten elder sons of Jacob, then, set out for the land of Egypt on this errand, and into Egypt they came.

On making the necessary inquiries respecting the purchase of corn, they are directed, as all buyers both natives and foreigners were, to Joseph, without whom "no man lifted up his hand or his foot in all the land." The change produced in a youth of seventeen, by the addition of thirteen years; his new name, his dress, his language and manners; his high station and his stately demeanour, have effectually disguised their brother from their knowledge; and Providence, determined to bate them not a single iota of the humiliation predicted by the dreams, prostrates their "ten sheaves before the sheaf of Joseph," levels the ten proud spirits at their unknown brother's feet. Want makes men wonderfully submissive and complying; and they who fight against God will sooner or later find themselves dreadfully overmatched. Unknown by them, they stand well known and confessed to him. At sight of them, natural affection resumes its empire in his heart, and the tide which had long forgotten to flow now rushes impetuously from its source. He beholds ten; but where are the two, more beloved and endeared than all the rest? It is impossible to conceive, much more to describe, the emotions of Joseph's soul on hearing tidings of his father's family. What, to learn that his dear, his tender parent, was still in the land of the living; surviving so long misery

so dreadful; that his dear brother, his own mother's son was alive with him also, and in health! The sovereignty of Egypt, I am persuaded, never yielded him satisfaction half so sincere. ~

The singularity of his situation evidently suggested to Joseph the experiment which he now resolved to make of the temper and character of his brothers, and particularly of their disposition, in an hour of trial, toward their father and Benjamin. It is impossible to suppose him for a moment actuated by sentiments of revenge. Had he been under the influence of such a passion, the means of gratification were certainly most amply in his power. But the whole tenour of his conduct shows that he was governed by a very different spirit. His severity is altogether affected, in order the better to carry on the design which he had formed; and the peculiarity of his behaviour towards some of the brothers, is to be ascribed to some peculiar circumstances in the history of the family which the Sacred Penman has not thought proper to record. Some rigid critics, however, while they acquit Joseph of cruelty and revenge, severely accuse him of impiety and profanity in swearing, and swearing repeatedly, "by the life of Pharaoh," and that to a charge which he well knew not to be founded in fact. It is not our design to undertake a justification of Joseph in every particular. What character can stand throughout the test of a rigid examination? Sacred History exhibits men just as they are, not what they ought in all respects to be. Dark spots are most easily discerned

on the whitest garments, and foul blemishes in the fairest reputations. But let no sanctity of character presume to shelter the slightest deviation from the path of God's commandment. No, the smallest sin, if any sin be small, is a degradation and a disgrace to the most sanctified and exalted character.

While Joseph, the better to conceal himself, talks and acts like a true Egyptian, God employs his affected sternness and severity to awaken their slumbering consciences, and to show the sons of Jacob to themselves. Treated as spies, roughly spoken to, their most solemn protestations disregarded, put into prison and bound—their treatment of Joseph in the evil day which put him in their power rushes upon their memory in all its guilt and horror, and they mutually upbraid and reproach each other with their barbarity; “saying one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold also his blood is required.”

This mutual and self-accusation excites in the tender heart of Joseph emotions which he is unable to conceal. Hearing himself mentioned with so much tenderness and regret, by persons once so cruel, and in a language which he had been long unaccustomed to hear, the pretended Egyptian

becomes, in spite of himself, a real Israelite; his bosom swells, his visage warms, the tear starts to his eye. In order to prevent a premature discovery, he is constrained to retire and to recompose himself. He returns and renews the conversation, and again, assuming the Lord of Egypt, sets nine at liberty, binds Simeon before their eyes, and commits him to close confinement, as a hostage for their return, together with Benjamin their brother.

He then dismisses them, loaded with corn for their families, and with provision for the way, having secretly given orders to his steward, in making up the bags of corn, to deposit each man's money in the mouth of his respective sack. This was not discovered till they were considerably advanced on their journey homeward, when one of them, on undoing his sack to give his ass provender, observed his money in his sack's mouth. Upon their arrival in Canaan, the same thing is found to have happened to them all. On comparing this singularly strange circumstance with the rest of their eventful journey to Egypt, they discern the hand of God in it, and observing such an unaccountable mixture of flattering and of mortifying events, they remain upon the whole perplexed and confounded. When the mind is sore, and the conscience is seriously alarmed, dispensations of every complexion, both mercy and judgment, are viewed with a fearful eye. When we know that we are deserving of punish-

ment, every thing becomes a punishment to us, either felt or feared.

And now again, the unhappy father, on reckoning his long-expected sons as they arrive, finds their number short by one more; "Simeon too is not;" and the account given of his absence, instead of pouring balm into the wound, is "as vinegar upon nitre." "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not," and Benjamin is demanded. In order to recover what he has lost, he must risk still more. Simeon is not what he ought to be; but his kind, his forgiving father cannot think of giving him up, worthless as he is. To lose a pious promising child by death is painful, but the death of a thoughtless, graceless profligate, to a parent of piety and sensibility, is much worse. We see the distressed old man putting off, and still putting off, the evil day. He has more than one reason for sparing the corn brought from such a distance, and procured at such a risk. Before a fresh supply can be obtained, and Simeon restored, "the son of his right hand" must be surrendered, Benjamin must be taken away; and the thought of this plants a dagger in his heart. But the famine continues, necessity presses, and a second pilgrimage must be undertaken. The account of it, however, must for the present be deferred. The history swells as we advance, and we must postpone to another Lecture the sequel of a story so much calculated at once to please and to instruct. But behold a greater than Joseph is here.

Behold Jesus, "for the suffering of death,"

“ highly exalted,” distinguished by “ a name that
“ is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus
“ every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and
“ things in earth, and things under the earth ; and
“ that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ
“ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” “ All
“ power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth.”
“ The Father himself judgeth no man ; but hath
“ committed all judgment unto the Son. That all
“ men should honour the Son, even as they honour
“ the Father. He that honoureth not the Son,
“ honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”
“ I am the bread of life that came down from
“ Heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not
“ die. I am the living bread, which came down
“ from Heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he
“ shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give
“ is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the
“ world.” “ He that cometh unto me shall never
“ hunger : and he that believeth on me shall never
“ thirst. All that the Father giveth me shall come
“ to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no
“ wise cast out.” “ Ho, every one that thirsteth,
“ come ye to the waters, and he that hath no
“ money : come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy
“ wine and milk without money, and without price.”
“ It has pleased the Father, that in him should all
“ fulness dwell : ” “ and of his fulness have all ye
“ received, and grace for grace.” “ My flesh is meat
“ indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” “ Your

“fathers found corn in Egypt.” “Your fathers did
“eat manna in the wilderness and are dead, but he
“that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”
“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,
“hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the
“last day.” “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all
“the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there
“is none else.” “Blessed are they that shall eat
“bread in the kingdom of God.” “Many shall
“come from the east and west, and shall sit down
“with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the king-
“dom of Heaven.” “In my Father’s house are
“many mansions; if it were not so, I would have
“told you; I go to prepare a place for you. And
“if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come
“again, and receive you unto myself, that where I
“am there ye may be also.” “In those days, and
“in that time, saith the Lord, the children of
“Israel shall come, they, and the children of
“Judah together, going, and weeping: they shall
“go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask
“the way to Zion with their faces thitherward,
“saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the
“Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be
“forgotten.” “Ye are they which have continued
“with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto
“you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto
“me: that ye may eat and drink at my table in my
“kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve
“tribes of Israel.” “Eat, O friends, drink, yea
“drink abundantly, O beloved.” “He that cometh

“unto me I will in no wise cast out.” “These
“things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye
“might have peace. In the world ye shall have
“tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have over-
“come the world.”

LECTURE V.

GENESIS XLV. 3—5.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph: doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him: for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me hither before you to preserve life.

THE productions of human power and skill afford but an imperfect and short-lived pleasure. The delight of the artist himself is over, long before his work is completed, and the wonder of the spectator lasts only till he is let into the secret, and is admitted behind the scenes. It is not so with the works of God. When the mighty fabric of the universe was finished, God surveyed his work with perfect complacency and satisfaction, for "behold it was all very good;" and such, to this day, it appears in the eye of every beholder. No frequency of contemplation, no closeness of inspection, no keenness of investigation, no success in discovery ever bring on weariness or disgust. The eye is eternally delighted with the magnificence and splendour of the azure vault, with the verdure and the variety of the fertile earth. The music of the grove never fails to charm the listening ear; the perfume exhaled

from the flower, and the shrub, and the tree, never palls upon the sense. The whole order, harmony, majesty, and beauty of Nature, for ever astonish, compose, elevate, inform, and instruct the soul.

The same thing may, with truth, be affirmed of the Word of God. What human composition so exquisite as always to please? What human composition have we patience to turn over a tenth, or twentieth time? The stores of human wisdom are quickly exhausted; the eye speedily reaches forward to the end of created perfection. But though the charm of novelty may have passed away, though memory may have stored itself with the very words, and though the heart may have felt the impression a thousand and a thousand times, yet the beauty, the force, the excellency, the importance of Scripture composition, remain in undiminished lustre. That sun in the firmament of grace, which has irradiated, cheered, and blessed ages and generations past, is also our light and our glory, and shall, with unimpaired strength, with unconfined liberality, diffuse light, and life, and joy to the final consummation of all things.

If serious minds be disposed to think thus of Scripture in general, all persons of sensibility and taste will, I am persuaded, agree in forming such a judgment of the history of Joseph in particular. The unlettered man and the scholar; the child and the grown man; the ingenious and the simple; the believer and the infidel; Greek and Jew, have, in every age, admired, delighted in, and edified by a

story which, clothed with all the graces of eloquence, exhibits the most uncommon, surprising, affecting, and important events; and which conveys the purest and most sublime lessons of piety and morality.

The famine continued to rage with unrelenting severity in Egypt, and in the countries adjacent, and dire indeed must have been the pressure of that calamity which compelled a father, tender and affectionate like Jacob, after losing two sons by a stroke heavier than that of death, to part with his youngest, darling hope, at the risk of never seeing him more. How horrid must that plague be which can force a fond mother to devour her own child for food? Let this awful reflection, in a year of scarcity, and at a season of waste and luxury, [December 25th, 1782] check profusion, awaken our compassion to the poor and wretched, and temper our joy. The old man yields up his Benjamin, as if his own body were dismembering limb by limb. "If it must be so now," take your brother, and "arise, go again unto the man. And God Almighty "give you mercy before the man, that he may send "away your other brother, and Benjamin: if I be "bereaved of my children I am bereaved."

With double money in their hands, then, with a present, consisting of the choicest productions of Canaan, for the Governor of Egypt, and with the heart and soul of their aged father in their custody, they set out on a second pilgrimage to buy food. What is a land producing "balm, honey, spices,

“ myrrh, nuts, and almonds,” compared to a land of corn! What worthless things are gold and silver compared to bread? If our own country be less fertile in the wine and oil, the drugs and perfumes, the gems and gold of other regions, it is more abundantly productive of the staff, and of the protection of life,—the “ finest of the wheat,” the oak more firm and durable than cedar, and iron more precious than rubies.

Their arrival being announced to Joseph, and his brother Benjamin appearing with the rest; Benjamin, whom, having parted with a child, he could not have known but from the company in which he was found, he gives orders to make preparation for a great entertainment in honour of these strangers. The men were not more distressed at the harshness of the treatment which they met with at first, than they are perplexed and confounded at the excessive kindness and hospitality of their present reception; for an ill conscience is ever timid and suspicious. Against the time of Joseph's arrival they make ready their present, and, being admitted into his presence, they again prostrate themselves to the earth before him. In vain do men set themselves to counteract the decrees of Heaven. \

After the customary salutations, he, with a mixture of anxiety and hope, inquires after the life and welfare of their father, and, to his inexpressible satisfaction, learns that he was alive and in health. But the sight of Benjamin awakens too many tender

recollections to be resisted, too many fond ideas to be suppressed. The premature loss of their common parent; the partial affection of their kind father; the present anxiety and distress of the venerable man; his own strange eventful history; Benjamin's tender youth, his distance from home, his separation from paternal care and protection, his exposedness to dangers which had almost proved fatal to himself; all, all rush upon his mind at once, and excite emotions too powerful to be concealed. He is obliged to retire, in order to throw a veil over those feelings which must have betrayed him, and he gives vent to his heart in secret. Having recomposed himself, he returns to the company, and, resuming the Egyptian, commands the entertainment to be served up. Three tables are set out, one for himself apart, as Governor of the country; another for his guests by themselves; and a third for the Egyptians of his household, or such as might be invited on the occasion. For the Egyptians, either from religious scruples, or from political pride and aversion, abhorred a communication with other nations, in convivial or sacred entertainments.

And here was presented a fresh source of wonder to the sons of Jacob. By Joseph's direction they are arranged at table, in the exact order of their birth, without inquiry or information on his part. This, in connexion with the account which it behooved them to have heard, concerning such an extraordinary person, must have conveyed to them an

idea of a sagacity altogether preternatural. Nor would their surprise be diminished by the distinguished mark of respect shown to their youngest brother; for the mess sent from the Governor's table to him was "five times" the quantity of any of the rest; and it was thus that in ancient times, among eastern nations, superior deference and esteem were expressed. However, the increasing festivity of the banquet gradually dissipated all their terrors. "They drank and were merry." The Hebrew word, unquestionably, insinuates that they drank to excess. It is natural for men to rush from one extreme to another, and it is not improbable that Joseph threw this temptation in their way, in order to obtain a more thorough insight into their temper and character, by observing them attentively, in a situation when the heart overflows, and the tongue conceals and disguises nothing. Whatever be in this, he is preparing a trial for them, more severe than any which they had as yet experienced, and which in some measure compensated the anguish they had occasioned to their father, when they impressed him with the belief of his son's death. ✕

Loaded with civilities, provided with a supply of corn for their starving families, Simeon restored, Benjamin not detained, they set out on their journey to Canaan, with a merry heart, talking one to another of the strange things which had come to pass. But scarcely are they got clear of the city, when they are pursued and overtaken by Joseph's

steward, charging them with theft, and commanding them instantly to return to his master to answer for it.

With terror and astonishment, though in the confidence of innocence, they deny the charge, and reason upon the improbability of it. Search is made among their stuff for the goods alleged to be stolen; ten are acquitted with honour, and they are just beginning to exult in the detected falsehood of such a scandalous imputation, when, to their utter confusion, Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Overwhelmed with shame and terror they are again conducted to his presence. The crime is proved; to deny it were vain, to excuse it nugatory and absurd; and to account for it is impossible.

Judah, who had been most urgent with his father to send Benjamin, and who had solemnly pledged himself for his safe return, feels himself called forth, and in a strain of the most pathetic eloquence that ever flowed from an aching heart, attempts, not to extenuate or exculpate, but to excite compassion, and to obtain mercy. The piece is of exquisite beauty and elegance, and being in everyone's hands, may be perused at your leisure. The Jewish writers take delight in dwelling upon, and in expanding it. Philo, in particular, in his treatise entitled "Joseph," has given a paraphrase of this speech of Judah, which possesses wonderful elegance and propriety of expression, and much force of thought. Some of you, perhaps, may not

be displeased with having an opportunity of comparing the diffusive, laboured eloquence of the Paraphrast, with the energetick simplicity of the Sacred Text. The former puts into Judah's mouth the following address :

“ When we appeared, Sir, before you, the first
“ time, we answered without reserve, and according
“ to the strictest truth, all the questions which you
“ were pleased to put to us concerning our family.
“ We acquainted you that we had a father heavily
“ laden with years, but still more heavily with
“ misfortunes ; a father, whose whole life had been
“ one continued struggle with adversity. We
“ added, that we had a brother peculiarly dear to
“ him, as the children born towards the end of
“ their life generally are to old men, and who is
“ the only one remaining of his mother ; his brother
“ having come, in early youth, to a most tragical
“ end. You commanded us, as the proof of
“ our veracity and innocence, to bring that brother
“ unto you, and your command was delivered with
“ such threatenings, that the terror of them accompanied
“ us all the way back to our country,
“ and embittered the remainder of our journey.
“ We reported every thing minutely to our father,
“ as you directed us. Resolutely, and long, he
“ refused to entrust us with the care of that child.
“ Love suggested a thousand causes of apprehension
“ upon his account. He loaded us with the bitterest
“ reproaches for having declared that we had
“ another brother. Subdued by the famine, he at

“length reluctantly consented; and, putting his
“beloved son, this unhappy youth, into our hands,
“conjured us by every dear, every awful name, to
“guard with tenderness his precious life, and, as
“we would not see him expire before our eyes in
“anguish and despair, to bring him back in safety.
“He parted with him as with a limb torn from his
“own body; and in an agony of grief inexpressible,
“deplored the dreadful necessity which separated him from a son on whom all the happiness
“of his life depended. How then can we appear
“before a father of such delicate sensibility; With
“what eyes shall we dare to look upon him, unless
“we carry back with us this son of his right hand,
“this staff of his old age, whom alas! you have
“condemned to slavery? The good old man will
“expire in horrors dreadful to nature, as soon as he
“shall find that his son is not with us. Our enemies
“will insult over us under these misfortunes,
“and treat us as the most infamous of parricides.
“I must appear to the world, and to myself, as the
“perpetrator of that most horrid of crimes, the
“murder of a father; for it was I who most urgently
“pressed my father to yield. I engaged by
“the most solemn promises, and the most sacred
“pledges, to bring the child back. Me he entrusted
“with the sacred deposit, and of my hand he will
“require it. Have pity, I beseech you, on the deplorable
“condition of an old man, stripped of his
“last comfort, and whose misery will be aggravated
“by reflecting that he foresaw its approach,

“ and yet wanted resolution to prevent it. If your
“ just indignation must needs have a sacrifice, here
“ I am ready, at the price of my liberty, or of my
“ life, to expiate this young man’s guilt and to pur-
“ chase his release. Grant this request, not so
“ much for the sake of the youth himself, as of his
“ absent father, who never offended you, but who
“ venerates your person and esteems your virtues.
“ Suffer us not to plead in vain for a shelter under
“ your right hand, to which we flee as to an holy
“ altar, consecrated to be a refuge to the miserable.
“ Pity an old man who, during the whole course of
“ a long life, has cultivated arts becoming a person
“ of wisdom and probity, and who, on account of
“ his amiable qualities, is almost adored by the in-
“ habitants of Syria and Canaan, though he pro-
“ fesses a religion, and follows a mode of living
“ totally different from theirs.” ~

This address, it must be acknowledged, possesses uncommon grace and tenderness, but it is evident from whence the modern Jew has copied his tenderest and most delicate touches; and when the copy and the original are brought close together, it will be apparent, to a discerning eye, which is the most finished piece. If Philo has made Judah speak well, it will hardly be disputed that Moses has made him speak much better.

The words of Judah penetrated the heart of Joseph. The affectionate manner in which his father was mentioned; the unfeigned earnestness expressed, to save him from the impending blow; the genero-

sity of his offer to put himself in Benjamin's place, to purchase a parent's comfort and a brother's release, at the price of his own liberty; all this satisfies him, that time, and affliction, and a sense of duty, and the powerful constraint of returning nature, had introduced another and a happier spirit into the family. He finds himself incapable of any longer deferring the pleasure which he should both receive and communicate by making a discovery of himself. The curiosity of his domestics must have been greatly excited by the unaccountable peculiarity of his behaviour to those strangers, but he does not choose to have any spectators of that scene of nature which he was meditating, except those who were to be actors in it. The heart likes not to have its stronger emotions seen of many witnessess. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermedleth not with its joys." He therefore commands every Egyptian out of the apartment, and, being left alone with his eleven brothers, whose consternation must have been greatly increased by the orders which they had heard given, he bursts into an agony of tenderness, and, in words inarticulate and indistinct through tears, declares in one breath who he was, and in the next, with accents that pierce the soul, pours out his heart in a tender inquiry after his old kind father. Two short words unfold the whole mystery of this strange conduct.

But what language can convey an adequate idea of Joseph's feelings at that moment; the feelings of a heart glowing at the thought of once more behold-

ing his venerable sire, of being pressed to his bosom, of cheering and cherishing his declining years; a heart melting into sympathy, forgiveness, and brotherly love, exulting in the joy of rendering good for evil; a heart lost in wonder, and overflowing with gratitude, while it contemplated the wisdom and goodness of all-ruling Providence, in producing such events, by means so incomprehensible. The feelings of the brothers too are rather to be conceived than described. Thunderstruck with astonishment, oppressed with shame, stung with remorse, petrified with terror; no, not terror; the words, the looks, the tears of their relenting brother assure them in a moment that they have nothing to fear. But, unable to make any reply, they afford the noble-minded, the condescending Joseph, an opportunity of so far recovering himself, as to be able to administer this strongest of all consolation, that their unkindness to himself had been intended, ordered, and over-ruled of God, to answer the most valuable and important purposes to him, to themselves, to their father's house, and to many nations. "Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you, to preserve life." In this address of Joseph I know not which to admire most: his magnanimity in pardoning offences so atrocious, losing sight of criminals in brothers; his wonderful skill in adapting the style of his consolatory arguments so exactly to the circumstances of the case;

his invincible humility, in carrying the spirit and temper of the lowliest condition and relations of humanity, into the loftiest, most envied, and most corruptive station of courtly grandeur; or his pure, fervent, and sublime piety, in considering and acknowledging all that had come to pass as the design and operation of Heaven.

With infinite judgment and propriety, the Sacred Historian has put no reply whatever into the mouths of the brothers. There are certain situations which defy description; certain emotions which silence best, which silence only can explain. And such was theirs.

Joseph, however, is not so lost in joy as to forget that it was far from being perfect till one more became a partaker of it; nor is he so much swallowed up in the present as to neglect the future. With gladness of heart would he have flown to Hebron, and been himself the announcing messenger of his own life and prosperity, to the good old man; but the duties of his station forbid. This is one of the taxes which greatness is doomed to pay: it must learn to repress the inclinations, and to forego the pleasures, of the private citizen: princes live not to themselves but to the public; and the happiness of millions is a felicity infinitely superior to every sordid, every selfish gratification. He could not, must not go to his father; but it was not impossible to remove his father into Egypt. The excellence of his disposition appears in every thing; in characters like his, we do not find duty justling duty out of

doors, but every one is in its proper place. Passion is tempered by prudence, and wisdom animated by passion. To render the projected removal of his venerable parent as easy and comfortable as possible to his advanced age and increasing infirmities, he proposes, for his residence, the land of Goshen, which was a province of the lower Egypt, on the east side of the Nile, bordering upon Arabia, and a frontier to Palestine. This province was fit for feeding cattle, the profession which his father and brethren followed; and it was not far from the city where the Egyptian monarchs usually resided, and where Joseph's stated habitation of course was. It is called *Zoan* in the seventy-eighth psalm, and *Tanais* by profane authors. This nearness of situation Joseph alleged as one motive to induce his father to undertake the journey; and there he engaged to maintain him and all his family in affluence and comfort.

In Pharaoh we have an amiable instance of qualities rarely to be found in the character of princes—attachment and gratitude. He cheerfully confirms all the engagements of his minister, though they extended to the disposing of a whole province of his empire; he outruns the wishes and desires of filial duty and affection, and strives to repay the kindness of Joseph, whom God had made a father to him, by becoming a shield and protector to his father's house. But what shall we say, what shall we think of Joseph himself? Men suddenly and

remarkably elevated are apt to forget themselves, to forget those from whom they sprung, and the means by which they rose. But behold the prime minister of a mighty empire, the favourite of a great and powerful prince, the lord of Egypt, attending to the conveniency and comfort of an old shepherd, whose person was unknown in the country which he governed, his religion abhorred, and his occupation despised. O nature, nature! How honourable is thy empire, how glorious are thy triumphs!

Joseph is now as eager to hasten the departure of his brethren as he was before artful to detain them, and, at Pharaoh's command, dismisses them with a retinue suitable to the rank and dignity of the man who was next to the throne. But it is with pleasure we observe, that the splendour of this retinue was not the silly ostentation of wealth and power, but the display of much better passions, the kindness, the liberality, the gratitude of a good and honest heart.

And is the sun indeed at length going to arise upon Jacob's hoary head? And shall the heart so long dead to joy yet once more awaken to transport? and shall his eyes at last close in peace? Alas, alas! are we not all dying to the world, before we begin to live to comfort? Is not the drama of life over, before we are well sensible that our part in the scene has commenced? Is it not rather too late in life to purchase a blessing so transitory, by a change so great? What will a man not do to save his family from perishing; and to be joined to such a son as Joseph? It is indeed late in life before we die to

hope ; and wisely and well it is ordered, that we should hope to the end. The man who has suffered so much, who has died so often, has not much more either to feel or to fear.

This dawning of happiness upon the head of the aged Patriarch is to himself so new, so unlike the common complexion of his lot, opens so many interesting views of Providence, that I trust you will consider the prosperous period of Jacob's history as a proper subject for a separate lecture. Here then we pause, after having suggested to your minds a few texts of Scripture, tending to illustrate and to apply what has been suggested.

—And—“ there arose a mighty famine in that
“ land, and he began to be in want. And he went
“ and joined himself to a citizen of that country ;
“ and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And
“ he would fain have filled his belly with the husks
“ that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto
“ him. And when he came to himself, he said,
“ How many hired servants of my father's have
“ bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with
“ hunger ! I will arise and go to my father, and
“ will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against
“ heaven, and before thee ; and am no more worthy
“ to be called thy son : make me as one of thy
“ hired servants. And he arose, and came to his
“ father : but when he was yet a great way off, his
“ father saw him, and had compassion, and ran,
“ and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” “ Come

“ unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden,
“ and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon
“ you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly
“ in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”
“ Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them
“ alive : and let thy widows trust in me.” “ Fear
“ not, little flock ; for it is your Father’s good plea-
“ sure to give you the kingdom.” “ O Jerusalem,
“ Jerusalem, thou killest the Prophets, and stonest
“ them that are sent unto thee, how often would I
“ have gathered thy children together, even as a
“ hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and
“ ye would not.” “ For of a truth, against thy
“ holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both
“ Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and
“ the people of Israel, were gathered together, for
“ to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel deter-
“ mined before to be done.” “ Because the foolish-
“ ness of God is wiser than men : and the weakness
“ of God is stronger than men.” “ This cometh
“ forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful
“ in counsel, and excellent in working.” “ Trust
“ in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in
“ the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight
“ thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee
“ the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto
“ the Lord ; trust also in him, and he shall bring
“ it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy right-
“ eousness as the light, and thy judgment as the
“ noon-day. The steps of a good man are ordered

“ by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way.”

“ Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace :

“ thereby good shall come unto thee.” “ In all

“ thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct

“ thy path.”

LECTURE VI.

GENESIS XLV. 24—28.

So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father; and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: And when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

IF there be pure and perfect joy upon earth, it is that which fills the heart of a parent when he hears of the wisdom, the virtue, and the prosperity of a darling child. If there be sorrow which admits not of consolation, it is the sorrow of a father for the vice or folly of an ungracious, thankless son, and for the misery into which he has plunged himself. The Patriarch Jacob felt both these in the extreme. He had now lived to the age of one hundred and thirty years; and he had proved all the bitter variety of human wretchedness. Every change of condition which he has hitherto undergone is only the sad transition from affliction to affliction. The burthen, at length, becomes too heavy for him to bear, and

we see a miserable old man sinking into the grave, under the accumulated weight of woes insupportable. In parting with Benjamin he had yielded up his last stake, and had renounced all hopes of happiness in this world; and we see him calmly looking forward to that peaceful region, where the wicked “cease from troubling, and where the weary are “at rest.”

But the full estimate of human life cannot be made till the scene is closed. The shades of night at last begin to disperse, and the day dawns. While he is tormenting himself, in Canaan, with the apprehension of never seeing more his last, his only remaining hope, Providence is maturing, in Egypt, a gracious design, in his behalf, which is in a moment to turn his sorrow into joy. Joseph, having discovered himself to his brethren, hastens their return homeward, and dismisses them provided with every accommodation for the safe and comfortable removal of their aged father, and of their tender children. What a triumph was that of Joseph! What a glorious superiority! The triumph of heaven, the superiority of God himself, who “overcomes evil with “good!” But he is unable to conceal the partiality of his affection to Benjamin. As he distinguished him, at table, by a five-fold portion, he distinguished him, at parting, with a more splendid and costly present, consisting of three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. In a wardrobe of great value and variety a considerable part of ancient magnificence consisted. This we learn both from Scrip-

ture, and from profane authors. Samson proposed as a reward to him who should expound his riddle, "thirty changes of garments." Naaman the Syrian, among other valuable commodities, carried "ten changes of garments," as a gratification to the prophet, from whom he expected the cure of his leprosy. Under the first Roman emperors this vanity and extravagance were carried to such an excessive height, that the Prætor Lucullus, according to Plutarch his biographer, had two hundred changes of apparel; and Horace insinuates, in one of his epistles, that, by some, the luxury was carried to the enormous extravagance of five thousand suits. And it is without doubt to this ostentatious profusion that the apostle James alludes, when he thus censures the abuse of wealth, "Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries; your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten."

But was it wisely done, sage governor of Egypt? Was it wisely done, thus to scatter the seeds of jealousy and envy in hearts so susceptible of those dreadful passions? Have you forgotten the coat of many colours, the dangerous badge of your father's fondness to yourself? Have you not rendered your own advice necessary, "See that ye fall not out by the way?" Happily, the recollection of past disasters, and the kind behaviour and gentle admonition of their affectionate brother, have subdued their boisterous spirits, and attuned their hearts to love.

The anxiety of the old man for their return is more easily to be conceived than described. How often in a day would his fond eyes turn to the way by which Benjamin was expected back? How would the tardy hours linger, as the heart languished with hope deferred? At last the blessed moment arrives, the train appears; the number complete, Benjamin safe, Simeon restored! But, what can this mean? Instead of eleven men driving their asses laden with corn, a splendid retinue, the glory of Egypt, the waggons of Pharaoh!—The heart which has been long inured to affliction interprets every appearance against itself. Some things are too good, others too evil, to be hastily credited. The utmost height of Jacob's expectation was to behold his youngest son again, with a supply of corn for his starving family. But to hear that his long lost, his much lamented Joseph was still living; that he was the ruler of all Egypt, the saviour of a great nation, the father of a mighty Prince, O it is, it is too much. Nature, tottering under a load of woe, now sinks and faints under an excess of joy. Such tidings are too flattering to be believed.

Did the brothers now disclose the whole of the mighty secret, and take shame to themselves for their vile conduct to so excellent a father, to so amiable a brother? Or, trusting to Joseph's generosity, did they conceal the part which they had acted in this strange mysterious drama? Probably the latter is the truth. The soul shrinks back from

the discovery of its own wickedness. To confess and to condemn themselves could now do no good, and must greatly have marred and diminished their aged parent's satisfaction, if indeed he had no suspicion how the case stood. The good man has been so long a stranger to felicity, that the possibility of it is called in question; so that slowly and cautiously he yields to the sweet demonstration. Convinced, satisfied, at length, what joy is equal to the joy of Jacob? Is it not worth wading through a sea of trouble, to come to such a shore at length? The blessings of Providence are well worth waiting for. They may seem to linger; they are not always such as we wished and expected: but they are ever seasonable, ever suitable, and they compensate, in a moment, the pain and misery of a whole life.

But is it not too late in life to undertake such a journey? No, it is to see Joseph, it is to be joined unto him; it is to be an eye-witness of his grandeur and a partaker of his liberality. How often has Egypt sheltered and nourished the church of God! Abraham, Joseph, Jacob, Moses, Jesus Christ himself, there successively found protection. The same place, according as Providence ordains it, is either a trying furnace, or a refuge and a sanctuary. A king that knows Joseph is a nursing father to Israel; another arises, who knows him not, and he wastes and destroys. But our Patriarch was not merely following the impulse of natural affection, though that had been warrant sufficient for even a still greater removal; he is also obeying

the dictates of wisdom, in making a prudent provision for his numerous and increasing family ; and he is listening to a special call and encouragement from Heaven. Before he leaves Canaan, probably for ever, he visits Beersheba, the chosen and favourite residence of his father ; and there he renews his covenant with God by sacrifice. Those enterprises are most likely to succeed, those comforts are likely to afford most genuine satisfaction, in which God is seen, acknowledged, and enjoyed. The sacrifices of the devout, by day, are answered by the visions of the Almighty in the night season. A man can proceed with cheerfulness and confidence when he has got his Maker's permission.

The vision assures him that he should arrive in safety, that he should prosper in Egypt, that he should embrace his son, and that " Joseph should " put his hand upon his eyes," that is, perform the last offices of filial duty and humanity. We meet with the same expression and idea, in many passages of the heathen poets. Penelope, in Homer, prays that Telemachus her son may close her eyes, and those of his father Ulysses. The mother of Euryalus, in the *Æneid*, among many other bitter expressions of sorrow over her dead son, laments that she was denied the wretched consolation, since he must die before her, of pressing down his dying eyes. Human nature thus strives to outlive itself, and the heart, while it is yet capable of feeling, consoles itself with the hope of receiving marks of tenderness and attachment after it can feel no more.

The old man's heart is now at rest, he is acting in obedience to the command of Heaven, he is complying with one of the worthiest propensities of nature; he is indebted for the commodiousness with which he travels to the person whom on earth he most dearly loved, and to whom, of all others, he would most willingly be obliged. —

How different is the Patriarch's situation every different journey which he undertakes! His first was to Padan-aram, when he fled from the face of an angry brother. Then he was solitary and friendless, but he was free from care, free from sorrow. The second, was his flying from unkind relations back again to Canaan, rich in children, rich in cattle, but troubled in spirit, and oppressed with anxiety. And now we see him, for the third time, in motion towards Egypt, richer than ever, both in possessions and in prospects, but bending under the pressure of age and its concomitant infirmities, worn out with calamity, and almost dead to joy.

The family of Jacob, including the addition of what Joseph had gotten in Egypt, now amounted to seventy souls. And the priest of On's daughter, whose alliance was doubtless intended as an honour to Joseph, is honoured and ennobled by being ranked in the family of Jacob, and by having become a mother in Israel.

Scripture describes, in its own inimitable manner, the meeting between the father and the son. "And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into

“ the land of Goshen. And Joseph made ready
“ his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father,
“ to Goshen; and presented himself unto him :
“ and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a
“ good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now
“ let me die, since I have seen thy face, because
“ thou art yet alive.” This is honest nature ; this
is the genuine language of the heart. In Joseph
we see filial piety and fraternal affection happily
blended with wisdom, humility, and discretion.
His will was law in Egypt. To what honours,
preferments, and emoluments might not the brothers
and nephews of the Governor-general have
aspired? But he consults their true happiness, by
guarding them at once from the languor of idleness,
and the madness of ambition. Shepherds they
were bred, and shepherds let them continue.
Violent transitions ill suit the staid and serious
periods of human life. His behaviour, as a subject
of Pharaoh, is equally amiable and praise-worthy ;
he never loses sight of the duties of his station, he
never becomes arrogant and assuming in the confidence
of royal favour. “ Without him no man
“ lifted up his hand or foot in all the land,” but
without Pharaoh’s consent he will not dispose of a
single field to his nearest relations. He is too wise
and too good to make the mad attempt of some
upstart favourites, to overcome national prejudices
by dint of power and authority. The Egyptians
held the profession of a shepherd in contempt, and

he is not silly enough to dream of *forcing* it into respect.

We have already taken occasion to praise the gratitude, generosity, and attachment of this prince, and with pleasure we repeat it. We see him nobly striving to discharge some part of the mighty obligation laid upon him, and upon his whole kingdom, by the son of the Patriarch, by showing all possible kindness to his father's house. "And Pharoah spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee; the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell; and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle."

The interview between the venerable man himself, and this good prince, is highly interesting and instructive. Old age and virtue are honoured with the kind regard and attention of a king. Royalty is instructed, admonished, and blessed by the wisdom of the sage, by the miseries of the man, by the piety and prayers of the prophet. Who gains by this visit? Pharoah to be sure. His kingdom is strengthened by the accession of seventy good subjects, with their skill, industry, and wealth: and "the effectual fervent prayers" of holy Israel were surely, Pharaoh himself being judge, compensation sufficient for the poor subsistence which a decayed, dying old man could receive from his bounty.

It is with a mixture of shame and sorrow that we bring forward the next passage in the history of Joseph. It exhibits him, indeed, as a most exquisite politician, who thoroughly understood the interests and the passions of mankind; who knew perfectly well how to take advantage of the occasion; but, over devoted to the Prince who had advanced him, employing his exorbitant power, his superior skill and address, in planning, and in perfecting, a system of despotism, by which the whole property of Egypt, together with the persons and the liberties of all that mighty empire, were transferred to the sovereign. We behold him most ungenerously seizing the opportunity which the growing distress of a lengthened famine afforded him, to aggrandise one at the expense of millions. He first conveys all the money in the land into the royal treasury; the cattle speedily follow; the increasing miseries of another unfavourable season determine the wretched proprietors to part with their lands for food, and even reduce them to the dreadful necessity of offering to sell themselves for slaves, that they might live by their master's bounty.

It is true the prime minister of Pharaoh did not push his advantage to the extreme length. But it must be acknowledged he carried it much farther than it became the friend of misery and of mankind. With so good a man as this Pharaoh, perhaps, absolute power might be lodged with some degree of safety; but who shall answer for other Pharaohs

who may arise, with the awful ability of doing mischief; possessing ability unfettered by legal restraint, not prompted by goodness, not tempered by mercy, not deigning to stoop to the sacred rights of mankind? Do we not see in the hardships which, under the following reign, the posterity of Israel endured from Egyptian despotism, the danger of extending regal authority beyond the limits of reason? And thus, in the justice of Providence, the family of Joseph first felt the rod of that tyranny which, with his own hands, he had established and aggrandized. Absolute sway can never be deposited with safety in any hands, but in His, who is constantly employing his power for men's salvation, not for their destruction. But we turn from a scene which it is impossible to contemplate without both regret and resentment; happy to reflect that we live in a country where law, not will, is the rule of government; where the loud voice of royal prerogative is drowned and lost, in the sterner, louder proclamation of, "thus it is written." We hasten from the vast, depopulated regions of state politics, to the pleasanter, fairer fields of private life.

Jacob's last days are by far his pleasantest and best. Seventeen years of unruffled tranquillity he passed in Egypt, enjoying the most pure and complete of all human gratifications—that of witnessing the prosperity, and of experiencing the attachment, of a favourite and dutiful child. But how comes it to pass that periods of happiness shrink to so little a measure in description, while scenes of

woe lengthen themselves out both to the sufferer and to the relater? We record our mercies on the sand of the sea shore, which the washing of every tide smooths again, and the perishing memorial is obliterated and lost; calamity we engrave upon the rock, which preserves the inscription from age to age.

But the famine has long been over, and why has not the Patriarch thought of returning again to the land of his fathers? Young men love to ramble from place to place; but old age is steady and stationary. Removal was attended with increasing difficulty every day, from the increase of his age and infirmities, and from the number of his family. Besides, Joseph's presence was become necessary to the government of Egypt: and to part with him again had been much worse than death. In a word, the whole was of the Lord, who was now laying the foundations of a fabric of wonders which should astonish the next generation, and every future age of the world, by the report of them. One hundred and thirty years of woe, and seventeen of comfort and happiness, came both at length to a period. Let the wretched think of this, and bear their affliction with fortitude; let the prosperous consider it well, that they "be not high-minded but fear." How dreadful is that misery which issues in despair of change! How exquisite the happiness which fills every faculty of the soul, and whose measure is eternity! But though Jacob be satisfied to live, and to die, in Egypt, he feels and expresses the natural

desire of all men, that his ashes should rest, in death, with the venerable dust of his forefathers. Perceiving therefore in himself the decay of nature, and the approach of dissolution, he sent for his beloved son, and bound him by a solemn oath to carry his dead body to the cave of Machpelah; that he too, in death, might become an additional pledge to his family, that God would, in due time, make good to them that possession of Canaan which he had promised.

Having obtained this security, his heart is at rest, and, for himself, he has no farther worldly concern. But the symptoms of approaching death are now upon him; sickness, weakness, and loss of sight. All the authority and wealth of Egypt are incapable of repelling those irresistible invaders; old age is a disease which death only can cure. But, even in old age and death, Jacob's early affections are his constant and remaining ones, Rachel and Joseph, and *his* two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. So long as the vital fluid visits the heart, the memory of his beloved Rachel vibrates upon it; the last beams of his expiring eyes seek for her image and representative, in her sons and grand-children; and even Benjamin seems, for a while, forgotten. Soon, that wounded heart shall beat no more, and those weary eyes shall close in everlasting peace.

The sickness of his father being reported to Joseph, he instantly quits every other employment, and, attended by his two sons, hastens to visit him, to receive his last dying commands, to receive his dying paternal benediction, and to cherish and sooth

his departing spirit with that cordial of cordials, filial tenderness and love. Though nature was come to its lowest ebb with our Patriarch, grace was in full spring-tide. The eye of the body could hardly discern the nearest objects, could not even distinguish the sons of Joseph; but the eye of the spirit, the spirit of prophecy that was in him, penetrated through the shades of night, and contemplated, with clearness and accuracy, ages the most remote; persons, situations, and events, the most distant. In this last and tender interview with his beloved son, he declares his intention to raise the children who had been born to him in Egypt, to their hereditary rank and honour in Israel; and he bequeaths to Joseph a particular possession which he had acquired by conquest in Canaan, "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the land of the Amorite, with my sword, and with my bow:" deeming him entitled, and not without much appearance of reason, to the double portion of the first-born. For his mother alone was the wife of Jacob's choice. And, had the course of reason and justice taken place, he should have had no children but by her. The posterity of Rachel then had an undoubted claim of preference, considering that, in strict equity, the whole would have belonged to them. At the same time he predicted the future fortunes of his grandchildren by Joseph; and, Heaven-instructed, he foretells that the younger should, in time, obtain the pre-eminence in rank, populousness, and importance. And now nothing remained but to declare

and publish his last will, or rather the will of God, respecting his posterity, for many generations to come. But this would require a much larger space than now remains, and we cannot conclude our discourse without having brought Jacob and Joseph somewhat nearer to the times which they foresaw and foretold; and to the glorious and exalted person from resemblance to whom they derive all their dignity and consequence.

Joseph sold into Egypt, degraded into the condition of a servant, exalted from the dungeon to the right hand of the throne, invested with power, drawing his perishing kindred unto him, and bestowing upon them a possession "in the best of the land,"—still prefigures to us Jesus "humbled and made of no reputation," "betrayed and sold into the hands of men," "lifted up" on the cross, and, thence, to a throne above the skies; "ascending on high, receiving gifts for men," attracting an elect world unto him, to give them "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

"Their eyes were holden, that they should not know him." "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, ~~Did~~ not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" ~

"And when all the land of Egypt was famished,

“ the people cried to Pharaoh for bread : and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph : what he saith to you, do.” “ The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” “ God did send me before you,” says Joseph to his brethren, “ to preserve life.” “ I go,” says Jesus to his disciples, “ to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” Joseph dispatches chariots and waggons to convey the feeble and infirm part of his father’s family to the land of Goshen, and supplies them with all necessary and comfortable provision by the way. It being expedient for Christ to go out of the world, he promises, and he sends “ the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to show his people things to come;” “ to lead them into all truth,” saying of him, “ He shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” “ Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou has received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” “ He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all Heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some, apostles : and some, prophets : and some, evange-

“ lists : and some, pastors and teachers : for the
“ perfecting of the saints, for the work of the
“ ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.
“ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of
“ the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect
“ man, unto the measure of the stature of the ful-
“ ness of Christ.”

Is your heart, O Christian, like Jacob's, ready to faint, through unbelief, or through an excess of joy ? Let your spirit with his revive, as you ponder “ the exceeding great and precious promises ” of the Gospel, in your soul ; and as you consult the Sacred Record ; as your evidence brightens up ; as the first-fruits of the Spirit are given and tasted. From Canaan there is a going out, from Goshen a going out, as there is an entering in ; but from the Canaan that is above, there is “ no more going out.” “ They are before the throne of God, and serve him “ day and night in his temple, and He that sitteth “ on the throne shall dwell among them. They “ shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, “ neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat ; “ for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, “ shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living “ fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all “ tears from their eyes.” “ He which testifieth these “ things saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen. “ Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our “ Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

LECTURE VII.

GENESIS XLIX. 1—33.

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

IT is the wise ordinance of nature that men should wish, and endeavour to live as long as they can. A life even of pain and misery extinguishes not the love of life; nay the mind, by a sort of pleasing delusion, creates to itself an imaginary immortality, and strives to extend its mortal interest and existence beyond the grave. Hence the anxiety of men to provide, for their families and friends, that subsistence and comfort which they are never to see them enjoy: hence the trembling forebodings of paternal solicitude about surviving offspring; hence the hope that glistens in the dying eye; the blessing and the prayer which quaver on the faltering tongue, and the last gush of joy that visits the scarcely palpitating heart.

At every period of existence we are thinking of some future period of existence; and we fondly carry the feelings of the present hour into the distant scenes of life, as if we could be susceptible of pleasure and pain after we have ceased from feeling. The child connects, in idea, the amusements of his

inexperienced age with the attainments of maturer years; the dying father continues to live in his offspring; and, till we are indeed gone, we dream and dream of being longer here.

We have attended the progress of the Patriarch Jacob through the various stages of a life unusually long, if we reckon ~~woes~~ for years, and if we compare it with the present standard of longevity; but short, if we consider the antediluvian scale; short, if we consider to what a span the history of it shrinks; short, if we compare it with eternity. The sun has shone upon his head at length, but not till it is covered with grey hairs; he has found his Joseph again, and even embraced *his* sons, but not till the hand is reduced to do the office of the eye. He walks down the steep of life in tranquillity, but his limbs tremble under him; his favourite son is wise and good, exalted to deserved honours, but his advancement has its foundation in the unexampled villany of nine of his brothers. He is now arrived at that point to which the sorrows and the joys of life equally tend, in which all events, of whatever complexion, must finally issue. Feeling in himself the approach of dissolution, and warned by that Spirit who had been his comforter in all his tribulations, he summons his children to his presence, and, with a mixture of paternal severity and tenderness, anxiety and confidence, administers his last dying counsels to them.

It belongs to another province than that of history, to illustrate and to expound this address of the

expiring Patriarch to his sons. Indeed it is a passage of perhaps as much difficulty as any in Scripture. The imperfect knowledge which we have of the sacred language, the abundant use which is made of metaphorical and figurative expression, and of allusion to historical facts which are either not recorded at all, or rather hinted at than related, together with the natural ambiguity and obscurity of prophecy—all concur here to render Jacob's meaning in many places hard to be understood, if not totally inexplicable. Instead, therefore, of spending your time, and abusing your patience, by dry unprofitable criticism on points which we frankly acknowledge we do not comprehend, we shall endeavour to look through the passage, just as it stands in the common translation, into the dying Patriarch's heart, and to observe how the affections of the man blend with the sagacity and penetration of the Prophet.

Following the order of nature, he addresses himself first to Reuben, and fondly recollects the first emotions which filled his heart on becoming a father; he speaks to him as raised up, and destined of Providence to birth-right honours and privileges, but as having degraded and dishonoured himself by a base unnatural crime, and therefore rejected of God. And thereby men are instructed that no superiority of birth, of fortune, of abilities, can counterbalance the weight of atrocious wickedness. In this censure, the shame, sorrow, resentment, and regret of a dying father seem to mingle their force.

The two next sons of Jacob had associated together for the perpetration of an unheard-of piece of cruelty, impiety, and deceit. Jacob had sharply re-proved them at the time; and now he gives his dying testimony against their perfidious conduct, in terms of just indignation and abhorrence, and prophetically threatens them with division and dispersion. But this which was, and was intended to be, a severe punishment to themselves, became in the accomplishment of the prediction, as the punishments of Heaven often are, an unspeakable honour and benefit to their posterity. Levi, in particular, "divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel," was thereby rendered only more illustrious and important, being dignified as the priests and ministers of the most High God, in the presence of all their brethren. The crime of Reuben affected his descendants to the latest posterity; for they never regained their original advantage of birth, never furnished judge, or general, priest, prophet, or prince, to Israel; but the offence of Levi was expiated in his own person, and reached not in its effects to his offspring. The moral consequences of guilt ought in justice to extend to the guilty themselves alone, but the civil effects may, and often do, involve the innocent; and that without any imputation on justice. The son ought not to suffer death for the murder which his father has committed; but he may forfeit for ever his hereditary honours by his father's treason.

By what apparent title was Judah, the fourth son

of Jacob, raised to a supremacy over his brethren? Neither his moral character, nor his intellectual abilities; neither natural pre-eminence, nor parental partiality seem to confer upon him this high distinction. It must therefore simply be resolved into the will of Him who “doeth according to his will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” It was of Providence, who raiseth up one and bringeth another down. But how came Jacob acquainted with this? The son on whom he conferred the double portion of primogeniture; the son whom he early dressed out in a coat of many colours; the son of his Rachel; the son of his old age; the son already so near to a throne, and still nearer to his heart, would undoubtedly, could a father’s fondness have disposed, succeeded to the royal dignity, to the sanctity of the priesthood, or to the still higher dignity of giving birth to the promised Messiah, or to all the three. But the purposes of Heaven do not always keep pace with the destinations of men; they conform not themselves to the conclusions of human reason, nor to the propensities of the human heart. Not gentle and forgiving Joseph, but stern, unrelenting, merciless Levi gives birth to a race of priests; and lewd, incontinent, incestuous Judah, not chaste, modest, self-denied Joseph, becomes the father of kings, and the progenitor of Shiloh. For what with men is all essential, all important, is with God only some little petty circumstance; and what human

understanding treats as merely a casual, accidental circumstance, Providence exalts into the mighty hinge on which the fate of empires and of worlds depends. Men bend before a throne and despise virtue; God pours respect upon goodness, and tramples upon a throne.

I must now express a wish which ought to have been done earlier in my discourse, namely, that those who attend the lecture of this evening had with attention previously perused the whole of this forty-ninth chapter of Genesis; as without at least a general knowledge of it, much of what has been said, and still may be said, will possibly be unintelligible; and one great, perhaps the principal object of the lecture will be obtained, if any are thereby induced to search the Scriptures more carefully, and to compare spiritual things with spiritual more diligently.

Jacob, then, guided by the spirit of prophecy, as lately in preferring Ephraim to Manasseh, and not following his own spirit, which would have given the preference to Joseph, as his father's partiality would have set Esau before himself, assigns the kingdom to his fourth son, with a profusion of images and emblems significant of power, authority, and plenty, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall

“rouse him up?” A lion’s whelp, a lion, an old lion; garments washed in wine, and clothes in the blood of grapes; eyes red with wine, teeth white with milk, is the strong figurative language, employed by a prophetic father, to represent the invincible force, the secure dignity and majesty, the rich abundance allotted of God, the disposer of all things, to this prerogative tribe.

But the prediction of importance above all the rest is that which we have in the tenth verse, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” Now, whatever difficulties may occur in the solution of particular words and phrases in this prophecy, it is certain that the Patriarch has his mind filled with an object peculiarly great; that he foresees regal and legislative power conferred on this branch of his family for a long succession of ages, and until the arrival of a certain distinguished person or event, expressed by the term *Shiloh*, who should make a remarkable change in the state of Judah’s family, and of the world in general. And of all the persons and events, that have appeared from the death of Jacob to this hour, to no one are the words, with any degree of propriety, applicable, but to Jacob’s Son and Lord, in whom the royal line terminated; in whose trial and condemnation the posterity of Jacob solemnly renounced all regal and judicial authority, and voluntarily submitted to Cæsar as their sovereign; and to whom

Providence, by a chain of miracles at first, and an uninterrupted interposition for almost one thousand eight hundred years, has drawn and united the nations of the earth, according to the letter of the prophecy, "to him shall the gathering of the people be." We pretend not to say that the dying Patriarch had a clear and distinct fore-knowledge of the object, or that his words are a full historical description of the period to which they refer. It is sufficient for our purpose, if events which have certainly come to pass are such as warrant a sober application of them to a prediction so singular, in circumstances so peculiar, and at a period so remote.

A very close investigation of the history, character, and local circumstances of the six tribes whose fathers are next named in order, would probably be found to justify what their prophetic father here foretold concerning them. But with him we hasten them by, with him to come at a nobler, dearer object on which parental affection fixes with peculiar delight; which the understanding, the heart, and the prophetic soul unite to establish, to exalt, to enlarge. The only way to do justice to the prophet, to the prophecy, and to the Spirit which inspired the one to utter the other, is simply to read the words, and then to ponder them in our hearts. "Joseph
" is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well,
" whose branches run over the wall. The archers
" have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and
" hated him. But his bow abode in strength, and
" the arms of his hands were made strong by the

“hands of the mighty God of Jacob: from thence
“is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.—Even by
“the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and
“by the Almighty who shall bless thee with bless-
“ings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that
“lie under, blessings of the breast and of the womb,
“The blessings of thy father have prevailed, above
“the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost
“bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on
“the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head
“of him that was separate from his brethren.” Is
there an appearance of incoherence here, is there
a redundancy of expression, is there a mixing of
metaphor? It is but the more emphatically expres-
sive of the meltings, the overflowings of an affec-
tionate heart, collecting its last remains of vigour,
retarding for a moment the stroke of death, re-
turning yet once again—but to return no more—
to ancient feelings and propensities, expiring in the
contemplation of the lasting felicity of a dearer self.
Here is the lover, the husband of Rachel, before
his nerves are for ever unstrung, his eyes for ever
closed, his tongue for ever silent, dwelling on the
name of her loved offspring, turning the almost
extinguished orbs toward his amiable countenance,
and straining his darling Joseph in his last embrace.
He has hardly strength left to mention the name of
Benjamin, but nature, while death leaves Jacob any
remainder of her empire, continues possessed of a
sound memory, a discerning judgment, and glowing

affections. But she can do no more, the voice fails, the limbs contract, the breath departs, the artery beats no longer; the heart of Jacob is, at length, at rest.

The death of a parent is an event peculiarly affecting. The source of our own life seems thereby as it were dried up. While our parents live we think we have a barrier betwixt us and the grave, but that being removed, the bold invader appears advancing upon us with hastier strides. If we look forward, behold there is no bulwark to defend us; if backward, our very children are warning us of the necessity of our departure; they press upon our heels, they are ready to lay their hands upon our eyes. Death ever so long expected, ever so visibly approaching, nevertheless shocks and surprises when it comes.

Joseph having given way to a burst of sorrow over the lifeless clay of his honoured father, sets about the speedy execution of his solemn trust, in discharge of the oath which he had taken. The highest respect that we can pay to the dead is to fulfil their living desires. He accordingly gives commandment to have the body embalmed according to the manner of the Egyptians. This practice which had its origin in necessity, degenerated in process of time into the grossest ostentation and the most absurd vanity. During the inundations of the Nile it was necessary to employ art to preserve dead bodies from putrefaction, till the water subsided. But what was at first merely a temporary expedient against

the inconveniency of heat, moisture, and corruption, at a season when sepulture was impossible, by degrees—refined, shall I say? in the hands of that ingenious people, into a work of infinite skill and expense; for so silly and vain-glorious is the human mind, that it strives for the gratification of pride in objects the most humbling and mortifying. We are far from charging Joseph with acting upon a motive so wretched. The journey to Canaan was long; it was needful to use the common methods, in order to keep the corpse from becoming offensive; perhaps he deemed it decent and wise to conform, in a matter not directly sinful, to the practice, and to yield to the prejudices of the people among whom he dwelt. Whatever were his motives, certain it is, that in embalming persons of distinction a considerable time was employed, and large sums were expended. Threescore and ten days, at least, were necessary; forty, in filling the body with aromatic drugs and spices, and thirty, in hardening and drying it with salt and nitre. Some Jewish writers, fond of magnifying in every thing their extraction, give out that Jacob, by express order of Pharaoh, was embalmed after the manner of the Princes of Egypt, as a farther mark of his gratitude and respect to Joseph; and that this explains the account which we have in Scripture of the general mourning of the Egyptians for him, during the seventy days of the embalming.

At the end of that period, Joseph makes applica-

tion to the King for liberty to go to Canaan to bury his dead father. And here we have another not unamusing picture of the ancient manners of an Egyptian court. Joseph the saviour of Egypt, the second man in the kingdom, might not go into the royal presence in a mourning habit. At such pains has the world been, and still takes, to keep truth from the eyes and the ears of kings. Unhappy beings! how can they be wise and good? Every creature about them is in a conspiracy to keep them from the knowledge of themselves. The poor man must not see a memorial of death, because death brings him to the level of other men. Pity it is that so well conditioned a prince as this Pharaoh was should want any help to wisdom. Studious of the honour and comfort of so good and faithful a servant, he grants an immediate assent to his request, and permits him to employ the whole pomp of Egypt, if it might testify respect to the memory of the honest Patriarch. Mark, my friends, how short the transition, how sudden the change. It is but a few short years since the waggons of Pharaoh were sent with much form to carry Jacob into Egypt, and now the same pomp is employed to convey his breathless clay back to Canaan again. Alas, alas! the ceremonies of a coronation, and of a funeral, differ only in a few trifling circumstances. Jacob is embalmed by the physicians; but behold he is preserved by a more precious perfume than all the spices of Egypt—the pious tears of a dutiful and affectionate child;—and his

memory, preserved on this never-dying Record, sends forth a fragrance which time cannot waste, nor use diminish.

The account is now at length closed, and the balance struck. And how does it stand? A life of one hundred and forty-seven years in all, of which not above a ninth part passed in any tolerable degree of peace and comfort, and that portion of it, at a period when the heart has scarcely any taste of pleasure at all. The early, the susceptible part of Jacob's life, was filled with a succession of distresses of the most disastrous and overwhelming nature; he was stricken, smitten there where the heart most sensibly feels. But let us turn the page and examine the articles which make for him. An early declared, and continually supported favour and preference of Heaven, in his behalf: early, constant, habitual impressions of piety; the covenant promise and presence of the Almighty; the testimony of a conscience void of offence: the aggrandizement and the virtues of his beloved son; seventeen years of uninterrupted quiet, with daily growing prospects of prosperity to his family: and the consolation of expiring at last in the arms of Joseph. O the balance is greatly in his favour! Who shall dare to say that God has dealt hardly with him? We will make Jacob himself judge of the case now, and defy him to say, "All these things are against me."

The Patriarch makes a greater figure in death, than ever he had done in his life. The house of Israel, the seed of Abraham, is now beginning to

make a considerable appearance in the world. Egyptians forego their prejudices to do honour to the old shepherd of Beersheba, and the nations of Canaan are awakened to attention and respect to a family which they hated or despised.

But while the world is conferring empty, unavailing respect on the insensible dust, the immortal spirit has winged its flight to those bright regions where the faithful repose in perfect and everlasting peace, and where the smile of God obliterates all recollection of the favour of princes, and buries in eternal oblivion the pains and sorrows of a few transitory years. If saints in glory have any recollection of what passed upon earth, as undoubtedly they have, what satisfaction must it afford the glorified Patriarch, to call to remembrance the various stages of his pilgrimage state; the dark and dreary paths through which Providence led him; and which he once feared were leading him to destruction and death, now that he finds them all certainly, and directly, tending to his Father's house above? If saints in glory have any knowledge of what passes upon earth, as perhaps they may, what must it have been to Jacob, from the lofty height of a throne above the skies, to mark the order and course of Providence, in bringing to pass, upon his family, the things which were seen in prophetic vision, darkly, and at a distance, and spoken in much weakness and obscurity? What must it be to see the Gentile nations gathered together to Shiloh, the glory with the sceptre departed from Judah, but a

crown whose lustre shall never fade, put upon the head of Messiah the Prince?

If saints in glory have any intercourse with their fellow-partakers in bliss, what must it have been to Jacob, after treading in the footsteps of Abraham and Isaac his fathers, to overtake and be joined to them in that world where men are as the angels of God in Heaven; and to see his faithful children, his Joseph in particular, gathered unto him, every one in his own order, their day of trial also being over, and their warfare accomplished? What must it have been to all the ransomed of the Lord, to see their common Saviour returning on high, leading captivity captive, triumphing over principalities and powers? If there be joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, what must be the joy of that day when an elect world, in the person of their divine head, took possession of a throne eternal in the Heavens?

The next Lecture will conclude the history of Joseph, and the Book of Genesis, and bring down that of the world to its two thousand three hundred and ninth year, one thousand six hundred and ninety-five years before Christ.

—Jacob, like his forefathers, died, and was buried, and saw corruption; but he whom God raised up died indeed, and was buried, but saw no corruption; Jacob could observe, be offended with, and reprove the faults of his children, but Christ has power to forgive sins, and to change a sinful nature. The day which Jacob saw afar off is that which arose

under Jesus, in all its meridian splendour, and it continues to shine unto this day. The body of Jacob, by the skill of physicians, was for a while saved from putrefaction; the body of Christ, by the Almighty power of God, was preserved, so that not a bone of it was broken on the cross, nor a particle of it lost and left in the grave. The corpse of the Patriarch deposited in the cave of Machpelah, in Canaan, was a token and pledge to his family that in due time they should return thither and enjoy lasting possession; the resurrection and ascension of Christ's glorious body give full security to all his spiritual seed, that "those who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him;" "Christ the head, first, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." The possession of which Jacob's burial was the pledge, was itself partial and transitory, was long ago forfeited, and has long ago expired; but the succession ensured by the ascension of Christ, is "to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Egyptian art might keep together the dust of Jacob for a while; but the power of God, through the grace that is in Christ, guards every fragment and shred of it to this day, and "will raise it up again at the last day." The afflicted man Jacob saw the end of all his troubles in the friendly tomb; Jacob, the believer, the saint in bliss, sees no end to his joy, but a still beginning, never ending eternity. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." To me to live let it be Christ, and then to die, it shall

be gain. Let us be followers of them "who through
"faith and patience inherit the promises." "Be
"faithful unto death, and ye shall receive a crown
"of life." "The hour cometh, when all who are
"in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of
"God, and shall live." "Blessed and holy is he
"that hath part in the first resurrection : on such
"the second death hath no power ; but they shall
"be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign
"with him a thousand years."

LECTURE VIII.

GENESIS L. 24—26.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he swear to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

THE events of a short and uncertain life upon earth derive all their importance from the relation which they bear to a future and eternal state of existence. Remove the prospects of immortality, and what is left worthy of the attention and the pursuit of a man? What is reputation? A breath of empty air: honour, a bubble; riches, a bird eternally on the wing; youth, beauty, health, fading flowers of the spring; the splendour of kings, childish pageantry; a crown, a toy. That alone is valuable which time cannot impair, nor mortality destroy; that which, though the man die, continues to live and speak; that which, despised or neglected of men, is of high estimation in the sight of God. If in this life only there were hope, the happiest of mankind were a wretched, dark, comfortless being. But for the consolation of religion Jacob must have sunk under the

accumulated weight of calamity upon calamity; and Joseph, destitute of a principle of grace in the heart, had fallen in the hour of temptation, or despaired in the day of adversity; had risen into pride, when exalted to honour, or deviated into resentment and revenge when armed with power. But directed and supported by this celestial guide, he descends into the pit undejected, undismayed; he spurns with holy indignation the solicitations of illicit desire; he preserves moderation in the height of prosperity, and sinks the resentments of the injured man in the meekness and gentleness of the affectionate brother. A character so near perfection seldom occurs; we have therefore been tempted to dwell upon it the longer, and now that we must part with it, we bid it farewell with no little regret.

The last office in which we left Joseph employed was the burial of his venerable parent; in which he at once acquitted a solemn obligation, fulfilled the law of humanity, gratitude, and filial duty, and acted faith in the covenant and promise of God given to his forefathers. He is never so much an Egyptian as to forget that he is an Israelite; but, engaged in the duties of a son of Israel, he remembers he was a naturalized Egyptian. Having deposited the sacred pledge in the cave of the field of Machpelah, he and his brethren, and all his retinue, returned into the land of Egypt.

Terror ever haunts the guilty conscience; and men, whether they be good or bad, are apt to judge of others by themselves. The brothers of Joseph

considered the life of their father as the only bulwark betwixt them and their brother's anger. Knowing themselves to be criminal, they conclude he must be resentful; knowing he had the power, they suppose he must needs have the inclination to punish them. O how guilt degrades, debases the spirit of a man! In bad minds how quick is the transition from extreme to extreme! How nearly allied to each other are vices seemingly remote, contradictory, and opposite!

These reflections are all strikingly exemplified and illustrated in the conduct of Jacob's sons. We see malice and cruelty passing into suspicion and timidity; insolence but a single step removed from fawning, flattery, and submission; and bold defiance of Heaven changing, in a moment, into superstitious horror. They had before done obeisance to Joseph, not knowing who he was, and thus fulfilled the dreams of his early youth, which had given them such mortal offence; with a meanness, equal to their former haughtiness, they now voluntarily prostrate themselves in his presence, and humbly deprecate that wrath which they had so unjustly provoked. What a pitiable, what a contemptible figure does a man make when overtaken and reproved by his own wickedness! A little mind would have enjoyed this triumph of acknowledged superiority, though it did not resort to retaliation; but a great soul like Joseph's indulges only emotions worthy of itself: seeing his father's children thus humbled before him, he dissolves into tears. Had he been ever so much inclined to vengeance, adjured by the awful names of

his father, and his God, his heart must have relented, and anger turned to pity. But, in truth, he had never harboured one thought of revenge; and the offenders possessed an infinitely better security in the generosity and compassion of their brother, than in the protection of their father's feeble arm, parental authority, or frail life. Being at no variance with them, entertaining no grudge, mark what pains he takes to reconcile them to themselves, "But as
"for you, ye thought evil against me, but God
"meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is
"this day, to save much people alive. Now there-
"fore fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little
"ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly
"unto them."

Such is the exalted triumph of true goodness. Not satisfied with merely bestowing forgiveness, it strives to close the wounds which guilt has made: it aims not only at bettering the external condition of the penitent, but also at meliorating his inward frame; it not only proclaims peace to the offender, but likewise ingeniously studies the means of restoring him to peace with his own conscience. This is the glorious triumph of God himself, who overcomes evil with good, turns enmity into love, and obliterates the foul traces of undutifulness and ingratitude, by painting over them the fairer, softer features of filial tenderness and dutiful submission. And in no one respect can human nature so nearly resemble the divine, as in pardoning transgression, in showing mercy, in bestowing on the guilty outward and

inward peace, and by burying and effacing painful and mortifying recollections in total and everlasting oblivion. Thus Joseph comforted his brethren, and spake kindly unto them. This spirit, a greater than Joseph, by precept, by example, and by the model which He prescribed for our devotions, has recommended and enforced; and thus, by habitually drinking into it, "men shall at length become perfect, as their Father in Heaven is perfect."

At the death of his father, Joseph was fifty-six years old. The history of the remainder, containing a period of fifty-four years more, shrinks into a few short sentences. But they exhibit a beautiful and instructive picture of a generous spirit, of great and growing domestic happiness, of a capacious prophetic soul, and of a faithful, obedient, and believing heart. He had the satisfaction of living to see his posterity of the fourth generation, by Ephraim his youngest son, and of the third, by Manasseh his first-born. He had the felicity of beholding Israel greatly increased, and the promise of God hastening to its accomplishment; resigned to die in Egypt, but looking and longing for a sepulchre in Canaan. Jacob's, a life of almost uninterrupted misery, is lengthened out to the hundred and forty-seventh year; Joseph's, with the exception of a very few years, a scene of splendour, usefulness, and prosperity, is cut short at a hundred and ten. But the difference dwindles into mere nothing before Him with whom "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." Grief has its cure,

usefulness its period, glory its decay, and pride its destroyer, in the grave.

As his dying father held him engaged by a solemn oath to bury him in Canaan, so Joseph binds his posterity by a similar obligation, to carry his remains, when opportunity offered, to the sacred spot where the sleeping dust of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob reposed. Whatever had been his power or his possessions in Egypt, this is all he bequeaths to his children; his last, dying, will disposes of nothing but his bones. But it is not merely the natural desire of the man to rest in death with his fathers; it is the zeal, piety, and wisdom of the believer, leaving to his family a solemn pledge of his dying confidence in the truth and faithfulness of God. Accordingly, the dead body of Joseph becomes no inconsiderable object in the history of Israel, from this time forward to their final establishment in Canaan. With much pomp it was now embalmed; with much care it was preserved in their deepest distresses and afflictions; in all their wanderings it accompanied them, and never till they rested in the peaceable possession of the land of Promise, did it rest in the peaceful tomb.

But had the credit of Joseph declined before his death? Had Pharaoh died, and Egypt forgotten to be grateful, that no royal mandate is issued for a splendid public interment; that an affectionate nation accompanies not, with tears, the son, as they did the father, to his long home? Miserable would Joseph have been, had not his happiness rested on

a surer foundation than the smile of kings, or the applause of a multitude. Who shall be vain of any thing, when such a man as Joseph must be content to obtain that by entreaty and permission, which he once could have enjoined by authority. His pious attention to the dead is now requited by the pious attention of the living. And thus, of all the debts contracted by us, no one is so certain of being repaid, as the last solemn offices of humanity; here we only give and receive a little short credit; and the day of our burial hastens on with rapid wings to bring the account to a balance.

Thus lived, and thus died, Joseph, the son of Jacob,—a man whom all nations, and every description of mankind, have united to praise and to admire; whose character and fortunes the pen of Inspiration has vouchsafed to delineate with singular accuracy, and with uncommon strength of colouring; who, in every stage of life, in youth, in manhood, and even to old-age, interests, instructs, and delights every reader of taste, virtue, and sensibility. In him we behold one who in adversity preserved inflexible constancy; and in elevation next to royalty, adorned his high station by unaffected simplicity, incorruptible integrity, native, unassuming dignity, fervent piety, invariable moderation, and uniform modesty and humility; who, as a son, a brother, a servant; a father, a master, a ruler, is equally amiable and praise-worthy; who, to the sagacity of the statesman, added the penetration of the prophet, the firmness of the believer, and the purity of the

saint; who, by the blessing of Providence, was saved through dangers the most threatening, to pity, to forgive, and to preserve those who meant to have destroyed him; and who, in a word, was miraculously raised up of God, from an obscure station, to be an instrument of much temporal good to nations; to mature and execute the plans of eternal wisdom, and to typify to a dark age Him who is fairer than the children of men, and through whom all the blessings of nature, of Providence, and of redemption are communicated to mankind. We cannot therefore, as Christians, conclude this history better than by considering it somewhat more particularly, as a typical representation of the person, of the character, of the offices, and of the work of the Messiah.

We know the generation of Joseph the son of Rachel, and of the well-beloved of Jacob—but “who shall declare the generation” of the well-beloved Son of God, “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth?” Early, unambiguous prognostics foretold the future greatness of Joseph. Thus, the tongues of a thousand Prophets, signs in Heaven and signs in earth, the disposition of angels singly, and a multitude of the heavenly host together, before and at his birth, conduct the Babe of Bethlehem from the manger to the throne. Some allegorists, who inquire rather curiously than wisely, have carried the analogy so far as to represent Joseph’s coat of many colours, the distinguishing badge of his father’s partial affection, as typical of

the body prepared for Christ, “curiously wrought “in the lower parts of the earth.” When imagination, unrestrained by reason, and unconducted by Scripture, is set to work, any thing may be made to resemble any thing. But if the interests of true piety be promoted, we must give, as we need and expect much allowance; and so long as a metaphor presumes not to pass for a text or an argument, let metaphorical language be examined with candour, and the bold flights of an honest heart treated with tenderness and respect. While we thus plead indulgence for others, we are perhaps making an apology that is necessary to ourselves; and far, very far from this place be the vanity of thinking that “surely “we are the people, and that wisdom shall die with “us.”

We remarked of Joseph, that in making his observations upon, and in giving the report of his brothers’ conduct, a mixture of self-sufficiency, malevolence, and presumption might possibly insinuate itself;—but in the censure and reproof administered by the Brother and Friend of mankind, we always discover unmixed benevolence and gentleness; severity against the offence, without acrimony towards the offender; slowness to condemn, readiness to forgive: a disposition to palliate and to excuse the worst of crimes, instead of eagerness and zeal to detect, magnify, and expose the least. Jacob’s affectionate embassy to his sons in the wilderness, by the mouth of his beloved Joseph, in all its circumstances, has already been noticed as exactly typical

of the message borne from the compassionate Father of men, to his wandering exiled children, by the Son of his love. Who can think of Joseph following his brethren from place to place, with thoughts of peace, and meeting in return with hatred and violence, without reflecting, the next moment, on the words of the Evangelists, "He came to his own, and his own received him not." "Not this man, but Barabbas." "Away with him, crucify him, crucify him." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?"

Joseph was sold, at the suggestion of Judah, to the Ishmaelites, for a few pieces of silver; the counterpart of this forces itself upon our imagination. "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men." "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Joseph, faithful and just to Potiphar, and to Pharaoh; Joseph, in the form of a servant, and the business and affairs of his master prospering in his hand, leads us directly to Him of whom it is spoken in prophetic vision: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." Joseph, assaulted with temptation, resisting and overcoming

it, conducts with our tempted Saviour to the top of the exceeding high mountain, to the pinnacle of the temple, and shows us all the fiery darts of the wicked one falling harmless on the ground, because striking on the shield of faith; and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, like lightning penetrating and piercing the armour of the adversary. Joseph, unjustly accused, condemned, and punished, without straining for an allusion, points to Jesus, "numbered " with transgressors," charged with crimes he never committed, and, after a trial, the mere mockery of all legal proceeding, condemned, with the vilest of mankind, to the death of a slave.

But we see Joseph even in prison and disgraced, preserving dignity, exercising usefulness, disclosing futurity to his fellow prisoners, restoring the one to the presence and favour of Pharaoh, leaving the other to perish under the weight of the royal displeasure;—thus we see Jesus, from the exalted infamy of the cross, dispensing more than life and death, opening and shutting the gates of Heaven, assuming to himself the right of disposing of seats in the paradise of God; carrying the penitent with him to the presence of his Father and his God, leaving the impenitent to die in his sins.

But there is here this remarkable difference; Joseph besought the chief butler to remember him, hoping to owe his enlargement to the powerful, compassionate, and grateful intercession of that officer; but Jesus, as Lord of the worlds visible and invisible, as the sovereign disposer of all things,

by his own power exalts his fellow-sufferer from the cross to a throne above the skies. Behold Joseph translated from the dungeon to the palace; from the condition of a prisoner and a slave, to that of a mighty prince: and in that behold Jesus emerging from the tomb, ascending above all height, exalted to the sovereign administration of all things in Heaven and in earth. Ought not “Christ to have “suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” “It became him, for whom are all things, and by “whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto “glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” \

Joseph revealed to Pharaoh, and to all Egypt, what was the will of Heaven concerning them for many years to come: thus Jesus revealed to a guilty perishing world the will of God for their salvation, and made timely provision, not for the transient and ineffectual support of a few fleeting years, but for the eternal entertainment and felicity of men who were devoted to death and threatened with everlasting misery. Joseph employed the pressure of famine to enslave Egypt, and to subject a whole people to the will of the sovereign: but Jesus, armed with all power for our destruction, employed it only for our deliverance; and instead of sinking and degrading the subjects of his government, such is his love, he raises them all to the dignities, privileges, and possessions of the sons of God. He is the true Prophet, “the light which enlighteneth “every man that cometh into the world,” “in whom

“ the Spirit of God is ; none so discreet and wise as he,” Zaphnath-paaneah, the true revealer of secrets, who “ is worthy to take the sealed book,” which contains the secrets of the eternal mind, and to open its seven seals.

The clemency of Joseph to his unkind unnatural brothers is a lively and affecting representation of the patience, gentleness, and mercy of Christ to his brethren after the flesh, in the first instance, and to guilty ungrateful men in general. “ Father, forgive them,” said he, as he was expiring on the cross, “ they know not what they do.” And not many days after that with wicked hands men had crucified and slain*him, many thousands of those very men were made to taste of his grace, were admitted into his family, and exalted to a place with him on his throne.

But we must not pursue the similitude through every particular, it would protract our discourse to an immoderate length. Finally, then, Joseph piously referred every thing that befell him to the provident, wise, and gracious destination of the Almighty ; and what saith Jesus ? “ I seek not mine own will, but “ the will of the Father which hath sent me.” “ My “ meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and “ to finish his work.” “ O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not “ as I will, but as thou wilt.”

And thus have we finished the history of the Patriarch Joseph ; the various stages of whose life may be thus calculated. He was born in Haran, in

the year of the world two thousand two hundred and fifty-nine, where he lived till six years old ; he was then removed with the rest of his father's family into Canaan, where he lived eleven years ; at which period he was by his brethren sold to the Ishmaelites, and carried into Egypt, where he served Potiphar ten years, and remained in prison three: so that he was thirty years old, when he first stood before Pharaoh, and was raised immediately to the dignity of Viceroy. Supposing the seven plenteous years to commence immediately on his elevation, he was thirty-seven when they ended, and the second year of famine being ended, he being then thirty-nine, Jacob and his family descended into Egypt; and the aged Patriarch lived there cherished by his son, seventeen years, which brings himself forward to his fifty-sixth year: after his father's death he lived fifty-four years more, in all one hundred and ten. So that Joseph lived in Egypt full ninety-three years: a slave and a prisoner thirteen: a prince and ruler eighty: under several successive monarchs; being justly esteemed a necessary minister of state in all reigns. He died before the birth of Moses sixty-four years, and before the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, one hundred and forty-four. And with the account of his death and embalming, ends the book of Genesis, containing the most ancient, authentic, interesting, and instructive history now extant; during the space of two thousand three hundred and sixty-nine years: from the deluge seven hundred and thirteen; and

before Christ one thousand six hundred and thirty-five.

These things seem as a tale that is told. But time is hurrying on a period and an establishment of things under which Adam and his youngest son shall be contemporaries; in which intervening ages shall be swallowed up and lost, and that only shall remain which time, and death, and the grave cannot affect: when the cave of Machpelah shall surrender up its precious deposit; when Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and all the faithful, shall live again, and reign for ever and ever. “Blessed are they who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” “Blessed are they who shall come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

LECTURE IX.

EXODUS II. 1—10.

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river, and her maidens walked along by the river's side: and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Go. And the maid went, and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son: and she called his name Moses; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

IF the ingenious fictions of ancient bards afford an innocent and rational amusement, and be therefore held in high estimation, what superior obligation is the world under to that divine Spirit who has vouch-

safed to draw into light the most remote antiquity, to preserve from oblivion the venerable men who first cultivated and peopled the earth; and, in the language not of fiction, but of truth, has delineated the ways of Providence, and unfolded the deep and intricate recesses of the human heart? Were it not for the sacred pages of divine Revelation we should have been entirely ignorant of what had happened in the world for at least one half of its duration. But, borne on the wings of Inspiration, we fly back to the very birth of nature, we behold the first dawning of light scattering the gloom, and we converse with the first man whom God created upon the earth. And how much more pleasant, as well as profitable, is it, to expatiate in the field of real history, than to wander and lose ourselves in the idle regions of romance! If we owe much to the illustrious Poet of Greece, for his amusing pictures of early life and manners, how deeply are we indebted to the more illustrious Jewish Historian and Poet, who has furnished us with so much juster and more exalted ideas of Deity, more faithful and instructive pictures of human life; and who has so successfully interwoven the history of Redemption with that of mankind.

The Sacred Book which has afforded us, during the year past, so much pleasing instruction, is altogether extraordinary in its kind, whether we consider the beauty of the composition, the importance of the information which it contains, the internal marks of authenticity which it bears, or the noble purposes to which it has been, and may be, made

subservient. Moses, its inspired author, who has with so much accuracy, elegance, and force described the characters and lives of the Patriarchs, from Adam to Joseph, is now entering on his own wonderful and interesting story. The man who henceforth acts is the same who writes; the events which he is about to record come not from the information of others, but from his own immediate knowledge; and the simplicity and candour of his narration are sufficient vouchers of its truth and faithfulness.

Sixty-four years had now elapsed from the death of Joseph, and one hundred and thirty-four from the descent of Jacob into Egypt: and what surprising changes have taken place! A little band of seventy persons is multiplied into a great nation: the mild and gracious prince, who took pleasure in cherishing and protecting the father and brethren of Joseph, is exchanged for a jealous and sanguinary tyrant, determined to depress and extirpate their descendants: the country which once gave them support and shelter is now moistened with their tears, and with the blood of their infant offspring; and favoured guests, once made to dwell in the best of the land, are turned into odious slaves condemned to the furnace. Such are the alterations which time is continually producing in human affairs; such is the impotency of man to secure blessings to his posterity; such is the misery of a people subjected to the will of a despotic sovereign!

In vain do men dream of national generosity and gratitude—they exist not: in vain do the claims of

humanity and justice oppose themselves to the interest, the ambition, or the caprice of princes. Joseph had very unwisely contributed to the aggrandizement of the Egyptian monarchs, and his own family is the first to feel the rod of that power which he had helped to raise. Injustice in princes is always bad policy. A nation so certainly favoured of Heaven as Israel was, must have proved the strongest bulwark to Egypt, if treated as friends. Increased from seventy souls to six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, it was dangerous to irritate them, and difficult if not impossible, to subdue. Too proud to enter into treaty with them as allies, too timid to attempt their extirpation by open force, and too suspicious to confide in their gratitude and attachment, Pharaoh adopts the barbarous policy of undermining their strength by excessive labour, of breaking their spirit by severity, and of preventing their future increase, by putting to death their male children as soon they were born.

Such a state of things was very unfavourable to marrying and giving in marriage. Nevertheless marriages were contracted, and children procreated; for it is absurd, as it is wicked, for any earthly power whatever, to set itself to counteract the great plans of God and nature. God has said, "Increase and multiply;" in vain has Pharaoh said, "Abstain." Amram, of the family of Levi, accordingly, in these worst of times, takes to wife Jochebed of the same tribe, indeed his own father's sister; by whom he had three children, Aaron, probably born before the

bloody edict for destroying the males was published; Miriam, whose sex was a protection from the rigour of it; and Moses, who came into the world while it was operating with all its horrid effects.

Josephus, in his Jewish antiquities, relates, that about the time of the birth of Moses, one of the Egyptian seers informed the king, that a child was about to rise among the Israelites, who should crush the power of Egypt, and exalt his own nation to great eminence and splendour, if he lived to the years of maturity; for that he should distinguish himself, above all his contemporaries, by his wisdom and virtue, and acquire immortal glory by his exploits. He farther alleges, that the king, instigated by his own fears of such an event, and by the cruel counsels of the seer, issued the bloody decree which will be an eternal blot upon his memory.

The distress of Jochebed upon finding herself pregnant, is to be conceived, not described. The anxiety and apprehension naturally incident to that delicate situation must have been aggravated by terrors more dreadful than the pangs of childbirth, or even the loss of life itself. As a wife and a mother in Israel, she was looking and longing for the birth of another man child; but that sweet expectation was as often checked and destroyed by the bitter reflection that she was subject to the king of Egypt; that if she bare a son it was for the sword, or to glut some monster of the river.

The Jewish antiquarian informs us that the anxiety of the parents was greatly alleviated by as-

surances given to the father in a vision of the night, that the child with whom his wife was then pregnant should be miraculously preserved, and raised up by Providence to the glorious and important work of delivering the seed of Abraham from their present misery. And indeed this fact is countenanced and supported by the short hints which Scripture has given us on the subject. Among the other instances of victorious faith, recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, that of the parents of Moses is marked with honour and approbation by the Apostle. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." It is not unreasonable to suppose that their faith might have some particular promise or intimation from Heaven to rest upon.

The time at length came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son, according to the same historian, without the usual pains and consequent weakness of child-bearing; by which means no foreign aid being required, concealment was rendered more easy, and the exertions of the mother, in behalf of her child, were scarcely, if at all interrupted. "A goodly child" is the modest language which Moses employs in describing himself; "exceedingly fair," or fair to God, that is, divinely fair, is the stronger expression of St. Stephen, in his recapitulation of this period of the Jewish history. From which, without the fond encomiums

of profane authors, we may conclude that Providence had distinguished this illustrious person, from his birth, by uncommon strength, size, and beauty. Every child is lovely in the partial eye of maternal affection ; what then must Moses, the wonder of the world, have been to his enraptured parents ! But the dearer the comfort, the greater must have been the care, and that care increasing every hour. Not only the child, and such a child, was continually in jeopardy, but certain and cruel death was hanging, every instant, by a single hair, over the heads of all concerned in the concealment ; nay the salvation of a great nation was at stake, nay the promise and covenant of God were in question. ~~

In the conduct of these good Israelites we have a most instructive example respecting many important particulars of our duty. They teach us, that no circumstances of inconveniency, difficulty, or danger, should deter us from following the *honest* impulses of our nature, or from complying with the manifest dictates of religion ; and, at the same time, they reprove that would-be-wise generation of men among us, who, from I know not what reasons of prudence, or others which they dare not avow, defraud their country, the world, and the church of God, of their due and commanded increase. Their faith in God, employing in its service secrecy, vigilance, and circumspection, admonishes us ever to connect the diligent use of all lawful and appointed means, with trust in, and dependance upon Heaven, as we wish to arrive safely and certainly at

the end proposed. In them, as in a glass, we see confidence without presumption; diligence, zeal, and attention free from incredulity; Providence firmly, undauntedly resorted to, with the consciousness of having done their utmost to help themselves. Without this trust and this consciousness, yielding their joint support, what must the wretched mother have been, compelled at length by dire necessity to expose the son of her womb, on the face of the Nile, in a basket of rushes?

It is pleasant to observe a perseverance of exertion, which leaves nothing undone that is possible to be done; and a faith which holds out as long as hope exists. Why not cast the whole burden on Providence? Is not He who preserved the child floating in an ark of bulrushes able to save him naked in the stream, or even in the jaws of the hungry crocodile? If an ark must be prepared, is it also necessary to employ all those curious pains in daubing it with slime and with pitch, to prevent the admission of the water? What, leave nothing to Him who has marked the infant for his own, and solemnly charged himself with his safety? Yes, after we have done our all, much, nay every thing, depends on the goodness of Heaven. But the careful mother acted well when she pitched every seam and chink of the frail vehicle as attentively as if its precious deposit had been to owe its preservation solely to that care and diligence. "Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Mark it well, it is our *care*, not our *work*, which we are encouraged to

cast upon that God who careth for us, and who hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Mark yet again, the diligent use of means and the interpositions of Providence, how they tally with, unite, strengthen, and support each other. The anxious mother does not yet think she has done enough. Miriam her daughter must go, and, at a distance, watch the event. And here ends the province of human sagacity, foresight, and industry; and here begins the interposition of providential care. The mother has done her part; "the rushes, the slime, and the pitch," were her prudent and necessary preparation; and the great God has, at the same time, been preparing his materials and arranging his instruments: the heart of a king's daughter, the power of Egypt, the flux of a current; the concurrence of circumstances too fine for the human eye to discern, too complex for human understanding to unravel, and too mighty for created power to control.

We pointed to the interposition of Heaven; but we beseech you to observe, it interposed not by working a miracle, but by the seasonable, simple, and natural disposition of second causes, operating to one and the same end, without any design, consciousness, or concert of their own. And be it ever remembered that the wise, gracious, Almighty Ruler of the world pleases not himself, nor amuses his creatures, by a profuse, ostentatious exhibition of wonders, but by an intelligent and dexterous

management of ordinary things. He carries on his righteous government not according to new and surprising laws, but by the surprising, unaccountable, unexpected methods, in which he executes the laws which he had established from the beginning.

Let us dwell a little on the minuter circumstances of the case before us, as they serve to illustrate a subject of all others the most comfortable and tranquillizing, to a race of beings beyond measure wretched and pitiable, if there be not a God who rules in wisdom and in loving-kindness all the affairs of men. We are first led to the humble cottage of Amram; and we mingle in the tender solitudes of an obscure family, in one of the most common situations in human life. From thence we step immediately to the palace, to attend to the humours, the caprices, and the pleasures of a princess. Jochebed the wife of Amram, and Teruthis the daughter of Pharaoh, what can they have in common with each other, excepting those particulars in which all mankind resemble all mankind? And yet Providence brings them together, gives them a mutual concern, a mutual charge, a mutual interest.

By how many accidents might this most fortunate coincidence have been prevented? A day, an hour, earlier or later, and the parties concerned had never met: the slightest alteration in the setting in of the wind, or of the tide: the particular temperature of the fleeting air, or the more variable temperature of a female mind, corrupted, as the children of kings generally are, by unbounded gratifica-

tion and indulgence, unaccustomed to contradiction, governed by whim, following no guide but inclination, and occupied only with the object of the moment. But these, and a thousand such like contingencies, unstable as water, and changeable as the wind, subdued by the hand of Omnipotence, acquire the solidity of the rock, and the steadfastness of the poles of Heaven. The mother could not part with her child a moment sooner, durst not retain him a moment longer; the princess could betake herself to no other amusement or employment, could select no other hour of the day, could resort to no other part of the river, could divert her attention to no other object; the tide could not run nor the the wind blow in any other direction, nor with greater or less rapidity. Moses was not safer when king in Jeshurun, encompassed with the thousands of Israel, was not safer in the Mount with God, is not safer within the adamantine walls of the new Jerusalem, than Moses in the flags, Moses at the mercy of the waves, of the monsters of the Nile, and of men more merciless than wild beasts. What power threatened the life of Moses? The king of Egypt. What power preserved it? The king of Egypt's daughter. What were the steps which led to his elevation? Those which foreboded his destruction. What circumstances forwarded the accomplishment of the Oracle? Those which attempted to defeat it. Could all this have been the work of man? No, it must have proceeded from "the Lord

“ of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working:” “ Who doeth according to his will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” —

The usual train of common events led Pharaoh's daughter to the river's side; the ark in which little Moses was laid happened to catch her eye, curiosity prompted her to examine its contents, and pity at the sight touched her heart. If there be an object in nature more interesting and affecting than another, it was that which now presented itself to this great lady's eye:—A beautiful infant, of three months old, deserted by its own parents, exposed to ten thousand dangers, and expressing by the tender testimony of tears its sense of that misery of which it had not yet acquired the consciousness. “ Behold the babe wept.” Pity is a native plant in a noble heart. The story told itself. The situation in which the child was found explained the cruel occasion; the sacrament which he carried engraven on his flesh declared to whom he belonged. Compassion was fortunately connected with power, and Providence wisely balanced one thing with another, the jealousy and severity of the father with the tenderness and generosity of the daughter.

Josephus, with whom Moses is justly a favourite object, has recorded many little particulars relating to this part of his history; and, among others, that when the child was applied to the breasts of several successive Egyptian nurses, he turned from them

with signs of much disgust and aversion, and that this encouraged his sister Miriam, who was anxiously attending the event, and observing the eager concern of the princess about her little foundling, to propose calling a nurse of her own nation, and thereby artfully introduced the mother herself to the tender office of suckling her own child. Whatever be in this, one useful lesson is taught us, on better authority than that of Josephus, namely, that perseverance in difficult and painful duty is the shortest and the safest road to the attainment of our just and reasonable desires. What a blessed change! The mother is permitted to do that for princely hire, and under royal protection, which she would have purchased, at the hazard of her life, the privilege of doing for nothing, could she but have done it with safety. Moses finds shelter in the house of Pharaoh from the wrath of the king, and he who was destined to be the plague of Egypt, and the deliverer of Israel, is trained to power, wisdom, and consequence by the Egyptian Magi, and by the favour of her who was next the throne.

But the Providence which saved him amidst so many perils, is pleased to record and to perpetuate the memory of his deliverance, in his name. It was customary to name the child on the day of circumcision, the eighth from his birth. Perhaps the anxiety and distress of their situation might have broken in upon some of the ceremonies practised upon that occasion: or if a name had been given him by his parents, he has not deemed it proper to

hand it down to posterity: it being his own design, and the will of God, that he should be known to all generations by the appellation which Pharaoh's daughter gave to the babe whom she saved from perishing, *Moses*, "drawn out," "because," said she, "I drew him out of the water."

The Jewish writers take delight—and who can blame them?—in expatiating on the extraordinary accomplishments external and mental, natural and acquired, of their great lawgiver. They ascribe to him the most perfect symmetry of features, uncommon tallness of stature, a noble commanding demeanour, the most engaging sweetness of disposition, the most winning address and eloquence, the most undaunted courage, the most profound erudition. Indeed, the singular beauty of his person is hinted, in no obscure terms, in many places of Scripture, and the additional lustre which it afterwards had communicated to it by intercourse with Heaven, lustre which remained unimpaired to the latest old age, convey to us a very high idea of his external appearance. But he stands in no need* of the pen of a Philo, or of a Josephus, to compose his panegyric; his own actions and writings are his noblest monument! and they will live to instruct, delight, and bless mankind, as long as good sense and good taste; as long as virtue, patriotism, and religion exist, and are held in estimation in the world.

The parallel between the Jewish and the Christian legislators is so striking, and is supported by so many Scripture authorities, that he who runs may

read it. Previous to the birth of Moses the Israelitish state was reduced to the lowest ebb of distress and despondency; the birth of Christ found a lost world sunk into the most deplorable corruption, guilt, and misery. Of the appearance of Moses there was a general expectation over all the land of Egypt. Christ, "the desire of all nations," was earnestly looked for by "all who waited for the consolation of Israel," who searched the Scriptures, and who observed the appearances of the times; and, by infallible signs, was his approach announced to mankind. The deliverer of the seed of Jacob was no foreign potentate, with a strong hand and stretched out arm, but a child of their own nation. And, Who is the Saviour of perishing sinners? "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels: but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

The extraordinary circumstances attending the birth of Moses were ascertained to the world, and transmitted to posterity, by means of an edict of the King of Egypt. The birth of Christ, in like manner, as to time, place, and situation, was marked out for the knowledge of mankind, by a decree of

Cesar Augustus, the Emperor of Rome. Both the one and the other, but for the special interposition of Heaven, had fallen victims to the jealousy and apprehensions of two bloody and ambitious princes. Moses escaped the hands of Pharaoh by falling into those of his daughter; Christ avoided the cruelty of Herod by retiring for a while into Egypt.

All history agrees in representing Moses as a person of extraordinary grace, wisdom, and comeliness; and of whom is the Prophet speaking, when he says, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; "grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath "blessed thee for ever?"

Moses was brought up in all the learning of the Egyptians; Christ was anointed with the Spirit without measure. Moses stands distinguished by a name which commemorates a temporal deliverance; Christ by two names, descriptive of his high and important office, "Jesus," the Saviour, and of the manner in which he was set apart to it, "Christ," the anointed of God. Moses began not to exist till the day that his mother Jochebed bare him in Egypt, but Christ says of himself, "Before Abraham was, I am." Moses from the beginning was faithful as a servant to Him who appointed him; but "Christ as a son over "his own house: for in "all things He must have the pre-eminence." Now to God in Christ be ascribed by all nations and generations of men upon earth, and by every angel in Heaven, kingdom, power, and glory, for ever. Amen.

LECTURE X.

LUKE XX. 27—38.

Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now, that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.

ONE of the most obvious and natural consolations of Reason, under the loss of those whom we dearly loved, and one of the most abundant consolations furnished by Religion, is the belief that our departed friends are, at their death, disposed of in-

initely to their advantage. We weep and mourn while we reflect upon the deprivation of comfort which we have sustained : but we wipe the tears of sorrow from our eyes when we consider that our loss is their unspeakable gain. “ Rachel weeping for her children,” refuses to be comforted so long as she thinks “ they are not ; ” but her soul is tranquillised and comforted when her eyes, in faith, look within the veil, and behold them softly and securely reposing in the bosom of their Father and God. It is an humbling and a mortifying employment to visit church-yards, to step from grave to grave, to recall the memory, while we trample upon the ashes of the young, the beautiful, the wise, and the good ; but we find immediate relief, we rise into joy, we tread among the stars, when, aided by Religion, we transport ourselves in thought to those blessed regions where all the faithful live, and reign, and rejoice : where “ they that be wise shine as the “ brightness of the firmament, and they that turn “ many to righteousness as the stars for ever and “ ever.” Distance is then swallowed up and lost, and we mingle in the noble employments, and pure delights of the blessed immortals who encircle the throne of God.

It is astonishing to think that there should have been men disposed willingly to deprive themselves of this glorious source of comfort ; men ready to resign the high prerogative of their birthright, and, by a species of humility strange and unnatural, spontaneously degrading themselves to the level of

the brutes that perish. And yet there have been, in truth, such men in every age. But it is no wonder to find those who satisfy themselves with the pursuits and enjoyments of a mere beastly nature, while they live, contented to lie down with the beasts in death, to arise no more. They first make it their interest that there should be no hereafter, and then they fondly persuade themselves that there shall be none.

Error of every kind, both in faith and morals, prevailed in the ~~extreme~~ at the period when, and in the country where, the Saviour of the world appeared for our redemption. The nation of the Jews was divided, in respect of moral and religious sentiment, into two great sects or parties, who both pretended to found their opinions upon the authority of the Inspired Books, which were held in universal estimation among them; and particularly upon the writings of Moses. But they drew conclusions directly opposite from the same facts and doctrines; and both deviated, in the grossest manner, from the spirit and design of that precious Record, which they both affected to hold in the highest veneration.

The Pharisees, earnestly contending for the strict observance of the Law, confined their attention to its minuter and less important objects, and paid "the tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin," but omitted "the weightier matters of the Law," "judgment, mercy, and faith:" and, raising oral tradition to the rank and dignity of Scripture, found a

pretence for dispensing with the plainest and most essential obligations of morality, when these contradicted their interests and opinions. Heinously offended at the neglect of washing of hands previous to eating, they were wicked enough to establish, by a law of their own, neglect of, unkindness, and disobedience to parents; thus, according to the just censure which our Lord passed upon them, “straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel.”

The Sadducees, on the other hand, the strong spirits of the age, disdaining the restraints imposed on mankind by a written law, thought fit to become a law unto themselves. They left the austerities of a strict religion and morality to vulgar minds; and, that they might procure peace to themselves in the enjoyment of those sinful pleasures to which they were addicted, they denied the existence of spirit, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution. They alleged that the Law was silent on those points, and that this silence was a sufficient reason for rejecting the belief of them. They went farther, and contended, that were such doctrines contained in the law, they ought not to be admitted, because they implied a contradiction, or at least involved such a number of difficulties as it was impossible satisfactorily to solve. The chief of those difficulties they propose to our blessed Saviour in the passage which I have read: and they do this, not in the spirit of docility and diffidence, to have it removed, but in the pride of their hearts, vainly taking for granted that it was insurmountable.

My principal intention in leading your thoughts to this subject, at this time, is the occasion which it afforded to the great Teacher who came from God, of discoursing on a theme nearly connected with the design of these Lectures; and of disclosing to us sundry important particulars, respecting the venerable men whose lives we have been studying, and those which we are still to examine; and respecting that world in which we, together with them, have a concern so deeply, because eternally, interesting. To these we shall be led, by making a few cursory remarks on the preceding conversation which took place between Christ and the Sadducees. And this shall serve as an Introduction to the farther continuation of a course of Lectures, on the history of the memorable persons and events, presented to us in the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments.

The Sadducees insidiously begin their attack by professing the highest respect for the authority of Moses and of his writings: "Master, Moses wrote "unto us." The most pernicious designs, the most malevolent purposes are frequently found to clothe themselves in smiles; often while mischief lies brooding in men's hearts, "their words are smoother "than oil." The father of lies himself can have recourse to truth, if it be likely to serve his turn; and the enemy of all goodness will condescend to quote that Scripture which he hates, if it can help him to an argument for the occasion. With this affected deference for Moses, the Sadducees are

aiming at the total subversion of every moral and religious principle, by weakening one of the strongest motives to virtue, and undermining the surest foundation of hope and joy to man. They allege that obedience to the law might eventually lead to much confusion and disorder? and they suppose a situation, for none such ever existed, in which compliance with the revealed will of God, in this world, would infallibly lead to discord and distress in that which is to come. In this we have an example of a very common case; that of men straining their eyes to contemplate objects at a great distance, or totally out of sight, and wilfully neglecting or overlooking those which are immediately before them: troubling themselves about effects and consequences of which they are ignorant, and over which they have no power, while they are regardless of obvious truth and commanded duty, though these are their immediate business and concern. The Sadducees, in order to cloak their licentiousness and infidelity, affect solicitude about the regularity and peace of a future state, which in words they denied, if they did not from their heart disbelieve.

I make but one remark more before I proceed to our Lord's reply. Eagerness and anxiety to bring forward and to establish an opinion, betray an inward doubt or disbelief of it. Truth is not ever proclaiming itself from the housetops, is not forward to obtrude itself upon every occasion, but is satisfied with maintaining and defending itself when assaulted: but falsehood is eternally striving to con-

ceal or strengthen its conscious weakness, by a parade of words and a show of reason. The zeal of the Sadducees to explode and run down the doctrine of the resurrection, plainly betrays a secret dread and belief of it.

Our Lord, in his answer, points out directly the source of all error and infidelity, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, and the power of God." Not knowing the Scriptures, ye suppose a doctrine is not in them because ye have not found it there: because ye have wilfully shut your own eyes ye vainly imagine there is no light in the sun, and take upon you to affirm there is none. Not knowing the power of God, you call that impossible which you cannot do, you deem that absurd which you do not comprehend, and you pronounce that to be false which you wish should be so. The whole force of the objection to the truth of the resurrection, goes upon the supposition that the future world is to be exactly constituted as the present; that the relations and distinctions which subsist among men upon earth are to subsist in the kingdom of heaven. But the supposition is founded in ignorance and falsehood; and the moment it is denied, the mighty argument built upon it falls to the ground. "In the resurrection," says Christ, "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven."

In these words, the condition of men in the world to come is described, first, negatively, "They neither marry, nor are given in marriage." The

Power which created the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, might undoubtedly, had it pleased him, have created the whole human race at once, as easily as he formed the first of men, Adam, and as easily as he rears up one generation of men after another in the course of his Providence. But thinking it meet to people the earth by multiplying mankind gradually upon it, difference of sex and the institution of marriage were the means which he was pleased to employ. In the resurrection, the number of the redeemed being complete at once, that difference and that institution, being unnecessary, shall be done away. Our Saviour adds, "neither can they die any more." Death too enters into the plan of Providence for the government of this world. Men must be removed in order to make room for men. But because this sphere is narrow and contracted, and unable to contain and support the increasing multitudes of many generations, is the Lord's hand shortened, that he cannot expand a more spacious firmament, and compact a more spacious globe to contain, at once, the countless nations of them that are saved? O how greatly do men err; not knowing the Power of God! Death is no part of the plan of Providence for the government of that world of bliss. In our Father's house above there are *many* mansions; there is bread enough and to spare; there is room for all, provision for all; the father need not to die to give space to the son, nor the mother to spare that the child may have enough. For they are "as

“ the angels of God,” says our Lord, according to the expression in St. Matthew, “ equal to the angels,” says our Evangelist, “ and are the children of God.”

This describes their happiness positively. Men on earth “ see in a glass darkly, they know in part, “ prophesy in part,” are encompassed with infirmity: but the “ angels in heaven excel in strength, stand “ before the throne of God, serve him day and “ night in his temple, without wearying; they see “ face to face, they know as they are known.” Their number is completed, their intercourse is pure and perfect, without the means of increase and union which exist here below.

Having thus reproved their ignorance and presumption, respecting the “ power of God,” our Lord proceeds to expose their ignorance respecting “ the Scriptures,” and produces a passage from Moses, in whom they trusted, which they had hitherto overlooked or misunderstood, wherein the doctrine in dispute was clearly laid down; and which we had principally in view in leading your attention to this passage on the present occasion.

The passage quoted is that noted declaration of God to Moses from the midst of the burning bush, “ I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” That God should have condescended to hold this language concerning Enoch “ who was translated that “ he should not see death,” had been less wonderful; for that holy man who walked with God upon

earth, was exalted immediately to a more intimate union with God in Heaven. But to speak thus of men who were long ago mouldered into dust, of whom nothing remained among men but their names, conveys an idea of human existence before which the life of a Methusaleh dwindles into nothing, an idea which swallows up mortality, and gives a dignity and a duration to man that bids defiance to the grave. That God should say to Abraham, while he lived, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," was a miracle of grace and condescension; but to speak thus more than three centuries after he had been consigned to the tomb, "I AM the God of Abraham," this exhibits a relation between God and the Faithful which perfectly reconciles the mind to the thoughts of dissolution. Indeed it is impossible to conceive any thing more elevating, any thing more tranquillizing to the soul, than the view of future bliss with which the text presents us. And this tranquillity and elevation are greatly heightened by the consideration, that Jehovah from the midst of flaming fire, under the Old Testament dispensation, and Jehovah, in the person of the great Redeemer, under the New, taught the same glorious truth to the world. And what is it? "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

When God was pleased to express his favourable regard to Abraham upon earth, what did it amount to? He led him through a particular district of land, in the length and the breadth of it, and said, "I will

“ give it thee.” But Abraham now expatiates through a more ample region, and contemplates a fairer inheritance, an inheritance, his own, not in hope; but in possession. Abraham, though following the leading of the divine Providence, saw the Redeemer’s day only afar off; but in virtue of his relation to God, he has now beheld the dawning of the morning expanded into the pure light of the perfect day. He once felt the events which affected his family, with the emotion natural to a man; he has since beheld them extending their influence to nations which he thought not of; and he now looks forward, in holy rapture, to that period when he, and his Isaac, and an earthly Canaan, and every thing of a temporal and transitory nature, shall bring their glory and their honour, and lay all at the feet of “ Him, who sitteth upon the throne, and before the Lamb.”

From Abraham we are removed to a distance of time and place in which thought is lost; and we seem to have no more interest in him than if he had never existed. But the doctrine of the Text brings us so close to him, that we recognise the friend of God, in the midst of myriads of saints in glory: we converse with him and continue to be instructed by him.

The dust of Abraham sleeps unnoticed and forgotten in the cave of Machpelah; but lift up thine eyes, my friend, and behold Abraham on high, and Lazarus in his bosom; his spirit united to God “ the Father of spirits,” and to all “ the spirits of just

the loss of Joseph ; this sweetened the descent into Egypt, and dissipated the gloom of death ; by this, though dead, he exists, though silent he speaketh, “ absent from the body he is present with the Lord ;” the moment of his departure is on the wing to overtake that of his redemption from the power of the grave. Before God the distance shrinks into nothing. That word, that one little word, I AM, unites the era of Nature’s birth with that of its dissolution, it joins eternity to eternity, “ and swallows up death “ in victory.”

The same gracious declaration applies, with equal truth and justice, to every son and daughter “ of “ faithful Abraham,” to every “ Israelite indeed.” We speak of departed friends in the *past* time, we “ cannot but remember such things *were* ; and *were* “ most dear to us ;” but it is the glorious prerogative of Jehovah to employ eternally the *present* in describing his own Essence, and his covenant relation to his People : “ I AM ‘THAT’ I AM.” “ I AM “ the God of thy Father,” of thy buried, thy lamented brother, friend, lover, child. And to us also is the word of this consolation sent, “ Fear not, for I “ *am* with thee, be not dismayed, I *am* thy God.” “ Thus saith the Lord, that created thee, O Jacob, “ and he that formed thee, O Israel ; Fear not : “ for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by “ name, thou art mine. When thou passest through “ the waters, I will be with thee, and through the “ rivers, they shall not overflow thee, when thou “ walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt ;

“neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I
“*am* the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel,
“thy Saviour.” Believing and resting upon this sure
foundation, the Christian triumphs in the prospect
of “departing and being with Christ;” he smiles at
the threatening looks of the king of terrors, exults
and sings with “the sweet singer of Israel,” “Yea,
“though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
“death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me:
“thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me. Surely
“goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days
“of my life: and I will dwell in the House of the
“Lord for ever:” and triumphs with the enraptured
apostle of the Gentiles, “O Death, where is thy
“sting; O Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks
“be to God who giveth us the victory through our
“Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is a transporting reflection, that the fond wishes
and desires of the human heart are warranted, en-
couraged, and supported by the revelation of God :
that the life and immortality, which we naturally
pant after, are brought to light by the Gospel. It
is pleasant to find wise and good men, guided only
by the light of reason, and the honest propensities of
nature, cherishing that very belief, cleaving to that
very hope which the Text inspires. Cicero, in his
beautiful treatise on Old Age, while he relates the
sentiments of others, sweetly delivers his own on
this subject. The elder Cyrus, according to Xeno-
phon, thus addressed his sons before his death, “Do
“not imagine, O my dear children, that when I

“ I leave you, I cease to exist. For even while I
“ was yet with you, my spirit you could not discern;
“ but that it animated this body you were fully as-
“ sured, by the actions which I performed. Be as-
“ sured it will continue the same, though still you
“ see it not. The glory of illustrious men would
“ sink with them into the grave, were not their sur-
“ viving spirits capable of exertion, and concerned
“ to rescue their names from oblivion. I can never
“ suffer myself to be persuaded, that the man lives
“ only while he is in the body, and dies when *it* is
“ dissolved; or that the soul loses all intelligence,
“ on being separated from an unintelligent lump of
“ clay; but rather, that, on being liberated from all
“ mixture with body, pure and entire, it enters
“ upon its true intellectual existence. At death, any
“ one may discover what becomes of the material
“ part of our frame: all sinks into that from which
“ it arose, every thing is resolved into its first prin-
“ ciple; the soul alone is apparent neither while it
“ is with us, nor when it departs. What so much
“ resembles death as sleep? Now the powers of the
“ mind, in sleep, loudly proclaim their own divinity;
“ free and unfettered, the soul plunges into futurity,
“ ascends its native sky. Hence we may conclude
“ how enlarged those powers will be, when unde-
“ pressed, unrestrained by the chains of flesh.—Since
“ these things are so, consider and reverence me as
“ a tutelary deity. But, granting that the mind were
“ to expire with the body, nevertheless, out of re-
“ verence to the immortal Gods, who support and

“ direct this fair fabrick of nature, piously, affection-
“ ately cherish the memory of your affectionate
“ father.” The great Roman Orator puts these
words into the mouth of Cato, in addressing his
young friends Scipio and Lælius. “ Those excel-
“ lent men, your fathers, who were so dear to me
“ in life, I consider as still alive ; and indeed, as
“ now enjoying a state of being which alone deserves
“ to be dignified with the name of life. For as long
“ as we are shut up in this dungeon of sense, we
“ have to toil through the painful and necessary
“ drudgery of life, and to accomplish the laborious
“ task of an hireling. The celestial spirit is, as it
“ were, depressed, degraded from its native seat,
“ and plunged into the mire of this world, a state
“ repugnant to its divine nature and eternal dura-
“ tion.” And again, “ Nobody shall ever persuade
“ me, Scipio, that your father Paulus, and your
“ two grandfathers, Paulus and Africanus, and many
“ other eminent men whom it is unnecessary to
“ mention, would have attempted and achieved so
“ many splendid actions, which were to extend their
“ influence to posterity, had they not clearly dis-
“ cerned that they had an interest in, and a connex-
“ ion with, the ages of futurity, and with genera-
“ tions yet unborn. Can you imagine, that I may
“ talk a little of myself after the manner of old
“ men ; can you imagine, that I would have sub-
“ mitted to so many painful toils, by night and by
“ day, in the forum, in the senate, in the field, had
“ I apprehended that my existence and my reputa-

“tion were to terminate with my life? Were this
“the case, would it not have been much better to
“dose away in indolence an insignificant and useless
“life? But, I do not know how, the soul incessantly
“exerting its native vigour, still sprung eagerly for-
“ward into ages yet to come, and seized them as
“its own.”

“I feel myself transported with delight, at the
“thought of again seeing and joining your fathers,
“whom on earth I highly respected and dearly
“loved: and borne on the wings of hope and desire,
“I am speeding my flight to mingle in the honoured
“society, not of those only, whom on earth I knew,
“and with whom I have conversed; but of those
“also, of whom I have heard and read, and the
“history of whose lives I myself have written for
“the instruction of mankind. I have the consol-
“ation of reflecting, that I have not lived wholly in
“vain: and I quit my station in life without regret,
“as the wayfaring man, whose face is towards home,
“bids farewell to the inn where he had stopped for
“a little refreshment on his way. O glorious day,
“when I shall be admitted into the divine assembly
“of the wise and good! When I shall make an
“eternal escape from this sink of corruption, and
“the din of folly! When amidst the happy throng
“of the immortals, I shall find thee also my son,
“my Cato, best, most amiable of men! On thy
“ashes, I bestowed the honours of the tomb. Ah!
“why did not mine rather receive them from thy
“hand! But your spirit, I know it, has never for-

“saken me; but casting back many a longing,
“lingering look to your afflicted father, has removed
“to that region of purity and peace whither you
“were confident I should shortly follow you. And
“I feel, I feel, our separation cannot be of long
“continuance.

“If, indulging myself in this fond hope, my
“young friends, I am under the power of delusion,
“it is a sweet, it is an innocent delusion. I will
“hold it fast and never let it go while I live.
“I despise the sneer of the witling, who would
“attempt to laugh me out of my immortality.
“Suppose him in the right, and myself under a
“mistake, he shall not have the power to insult me,
“nor shall I have the mortification of feeling his
“scorn, when we are both gone to the land of ever-
“lasting forgetfulness.”

How pleasing the thought, my dear Christian
Friends, I again repeat it, how pleasing the thought,
that the honest propensities of Nature, the fairest
conclusions of unassisted Reason, and the most
ardent breathings of Truth and Virtue, are here in
unison with the clearest and most explicit declara-
tions of the Holy Scriptures!

But the sacred Dove soars into a region which
Nature and Reason never could have explored. Re-
velation, to the Immortality of the Soul, has added
the Resurrection of the Body. And, “wherefore
“should it be thought a thing incredible that God
“should raise the dead?” The Spirit says to “these
“dry bones, Live.” “We believe that Jesus died and

“rose again.” What a sure ground of hope, that “them also who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him!” Delightful reflection! Who would be so unjust to God, and so unkind to himself, as to part with it? How it smooths the rugged path of life, how it tempers the bitterness of affliction, how it dissipates the horrors of the grave! One child sleeps in the dust, the diameter of the globe separates me from another, but the word of life, “I AM the God of thy seed,” rescues that one from corruption, and puts the other in my embrace. Time dwindles into a point, the earth melts away, “the trumpet sounds,” the dead arise incorruptible.” Behold all things are new! “New Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” “Arise, let us go hence,” and “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.”

LECTURE XI.

HEB. XI. 24—27.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

THE History of mankind contains many a lamentable detail of the sad reverses to which human affairs are liable; of the affluent, by unforeseen, unavoidable calamity, tumbled into indigence; of greatness in eclipse; of the mighty fallen; of princes dethroned, banished, put to death. In some instances of this sort, we see the unhappy sufferers making a virtue of necessity, and bearing their misfortunes with a certain degree of patience and magnanimity; but in general sudden and great distress either sours or depresses the spirit, and men submit to the will of Providence with so ill a grace, that it is evident they are not under the power of religion, and that they flee not for consolation to the prospects of immortality.

We are this evening to contemplate one of those rare examples of true greatness of mind, which made

a voluntary sacrifice of the most enviable situation, and of the most flattering prospects which human life admits of; and that at an age, when the heart is most devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, most susceptible to the allurements of ambition. It is the singular instance of Moses, the Prophet and Legislator of Israel, who, brought up from infancy in a court, instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, treated as the heir of empire, and encouraged to aspire to all that the heart naturally covets, and that Providence bestows on the most favoured of mankind, at the age of forty, cheerfully resigned all these advantages, and preferred the life of a slave with his brethren, and of a shepherd in the land of Midian, among strangers, to all the luxury and splendour belonging to the son of Pharaoh's daughter, to all the dazzling hopes of royalty, or of power next to majesty.

Scripture, in its own admirably concise method, dispatches the history of this great man's life, from his infancy to his fortieth year, in a few short words, namely, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words, and in deeds:" as not deeming information concerning attainments in human science, or feats of martial prowess, worthy of the knowledge of posterity, compared to the triumphs of his faith, the generous workings of his public spirit, and the noble ardour of fervent piety.

Philo and Josephus, however, and other Jewish writers, have taken upon them to fill up this in-

terval of time by a fanciful, fabulous, unsupported account of the earlier years of Moses; which we should perhaps be disposed, in part, to retail for your amusement, if not for your instruction, had not the Spirit of God supplied us with well authenticated memoirs of a more advanced period of his life. In the perusal of which, with serious meditation upon them, we shall, I trust, find pleasure and profit blended together.

Taking Inspiration then for our guide, we divide the History of Moses into three periods of equal duration, in respect of time, namely, of forty years each; but very different in respect of situation, notoriety, and importance. The first, and of which the Bible is silent, or speaks but a single word, presents him to us a student in the schools of the Egyptian Magi, one among the Princes in the court of Pharaoh, a Poet, an Orator, a Statesman, a General, or whatever else imagination pleases to make him. The second exhibits an humble shepherd, tending the flocks of Jethro his father-in-law, and fulfilling the duties, and exemplifying the virtues of the private citizen. In the third, we attend the footsteps of the Saviour of his nation, the leader and commander, the lawgiver and judge of the Israel of God: under whom that chosen race was conducted from Egyptian oppression to the possession of the land promised to Abraham and to his seed; the instrument chosen, raised up, and employed of the Divine Providence, to execute the purposes of the Almighty, in a case which affected

the general interests, spiritual and everlasting, of all mankind.

It is of the second of those periods, we are now to treat; and though our materials be small and few, if we are so happy as to make a proper use of them, we shall find that, by the blessing of God, our labour has not been in vain.

In Moses, then, in the very prime and vigour of his life, we see a mind uncorrupted by the maxims and manners of an impious, tyrannical, idolatrous court; a mind not intoxicated by royal favour, not seduced by the allurements of ambition, not deadened by the uninterrupted possession of prosperity to the impressions of humanity and compassion. And what preserved him? He believed in God. The mind's eye was fixed on Him who is invisible to the eye of sense. And what is the wisdom of Egypt compared to this? It was a land of astronomers, a land of warriors, a land of artists; and the improvement which Moses made in every liberal art and science, we may well suppose, was equal to any, the first of the age and nation in which he lived. But a principle infinitely superior to every thing human, a principle not taught in the schools of the philosophers, a principle which carries the soul where it resides beyond the limits of this little world, inspired high thoughts, dictated a noble, manly, generous conduct.

And first, it taught him to despise and to reject empty, unavailing worldly honours. "By faith
"Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be

“called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” Ordinary spirits value themselves on rank and distinction. Ordinary men, raised unexpectedly to eminence, strive to conceal and to forget the meanness of their extraction ; but Moses would rather pass for the son of a poor, oppressed Israelite, than for the adopted son and heir of the oppressing tyrant’s daughter. Putting religion out of the question, true magnanimity will seek to derive consequence from itself, not from parentage or any other adventitious circumstance ; will not consider itself as ennobled by what it could have no power over, nor debased by what has in its own nature no shame. To be either vain of one’s ancestry, or ashamed of it, is equally the mark of a groveling spirit. Art thou highly descended, my friend ? Let high birth inspire high, that is worthy, generous sentiments. Beware of disgracing reputable descent by sordid, vulgar, vicious behaviour. Hast thou nothing to boast of, in respect of pedigree ? Strive to lay the foundation of thine own nobility ; convince the fools of the world, that goodness is true greatness ; that a catalogue of living virtues is much more honourable than a long list of departed names. Know ye not, that faith makes every one who lives by it more than the son of a king ? For the son of a king may be a fool or a profligate ; but faith makes its possessor a son of God, that is, a wise and a good man ; and by it, Moses was more noble in the wilderness of Sinai, than in the imperial court of Pharaoh.

As this divine instructor taught him to undervalue and to refuse empty honours, so it inspired him with pity to his afflicted brethren. "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren." Ease and affluence generally harden the heart. If it be well with the selfish man himself, he little cares what others endure. But religion teaches another lesson: "Love to God whom we have not seen," will always be productive of "love to men whom we have seen." From the root of faith many kindred stems spring up; and all bring forth fruit. There arises the stately plant of heavenly-mindedness, producing the golden apples of self-government, self-denial, and contempt of the world; and close by its side, and sheltered by its branches, gentle sympathy expands its blossoms and breathes its perfumes; consolation to the afflicted, and relief to the miserable. <

The progress of compassion, in Moses, is described with wonderful delicacy and judgment. First, he foregoes the pleasures of a court. Unable to relish a solitary, selfish gratification, while he reflected that his nearest and dearest relations were eating the bread and drinking the water of affliction; he goes out to look upon their misery, and tries by kind looks and words of love to soothe their woes. Unable to alleviate, much less to remove their anguish, he is determined at least to be a par-

taker of it; and since he cannot raise them to the enjoyment of *his* liberty and ease, he voluntarily takes a share of *their* bondage and oppression. There is something wonderfully pleasing to a soul in trouble, to see one who might have shunned it, and might unblamed have turned away from the sufferer, out of pure love drinking from the same bitter cup, and submitting to the same calamity. At length an honest zeal breaks forth, and overleaps the bounds of patience and discretion. Seeing a brutal Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, incapable of suppressing his indignation, he assaults the oppressor and puts him to death. "Moses was meek" "above all the men of the earth." But "surely" "oppression maketh a wise man mad." This we allege as an apology for the conduct of Moses, not a vindication of it; for we pretend not to say it was in all respects justifiable. But it is one of those singular cases to which common rules will not apply.

The day after, he had the mortification of seeing two Hebrews striving together. Unhappy men! As if they had not enemies enough in their common, cruel task-masters; as if condemnation to labour in making bricks without some of the necessary materials could not find employment for their most vigorous efforts; as if an edict to destroy all their male children from their birth had not been sufficient to fill up the measure of their woe; they pour hatred and strife into the bowl already sur-

charged with wormwood and gall. Wretched sons of men! eternally arraigning the wisdom and goodness of Providence; eternally complaining of the hardships of their lot; and eternally swelling the catalogue of their miseries, by their own perverseness and folly; adding vinegar to nitre, and then wondering how their distresses came to be so great; Moses reprov'd the offending Egyptian by a blow, and a mortal one; he tries to gain an offending brother by meekness and gentleness; he makes reason and humanity speak; but they speak in vain; for the same spirit that leads men to commit cruelty or injustice, leads them also to vindicate and support their ill conduct. "And he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?" "And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" From this Moses discovered that the rash action which he had committed the day before was publicly known and talked of, and might prove fatal to him, unless he instantly fled from the danger. The affair had reached the ears of Pharaoh, who, it would appear, wanted only a decent pretence to rid himself of a man of whom all Egypt was jealous. He hurries away therefore out of the territories of the king of Egypt, into that part of Arabia which is called Petrea, from its mountainous or rocky aspect; and by a singular concurrence of providential circumstances is stopped at a city of that country called Midian, and is induced to remain there for many years.

There lived in this city a person of distinguished rank and station ; but whether possessed of a sacred or a civil character the ambiguity of the term, in the holy language, permits us not to determine ; and the Scripture leaves us totally uncertain whether he were a priest or a prince of Midian. But we are left in no doubt respecting his moral and intellectual qualifications ; and we shall have no reason to be displeased, at finding the history of Moses blended with that of so sensible, and so good a man as Jethro, or Raguel, turns out to be. Whatever his dignity was, the sacerdotal or royal, we find his daughters trained up in all the simplicity of those early times ; following the humble, harmless profession of shepherdesses. Wise is that father, kind and just to his children, who, whatever his station, possessions, or prospects may be, brings up his sons and his daughters to some virtuous and useful employment ; for idleness is not more odious, dishonourable, and contemptible, than it is inimical to happiness, and irreconcilable to inward peace.

Moses, being arrived in the neighbourhood of Midian, weary and faint with a long journey through a barren and inhospitable country, sits down by a well of water to rest and refresh himself. And, as a good man's footsteps are all ordered of the Lord, Providence sends him thither just at the moment, to succour the daughters of Raguel from the violence of some of their neighbours. In those countries, the precious fluid, bestowed upon us in such boundless profusion, being dispensed as it were in

drops, became an object of desire and a ground of contention. The daughters of Jethro, sensible of their inferiority in point of strength, endeavour to supply it by diligence and address. They arrive at the well before their rival shepherds, and are preparing with all possible dispatch to water their flocks, when behold they are overtaken by these brutals, who rudely drive them and their flocks away, and cruelly attempt to convert the fruits of their labour to their own use. Moses possessing at once sensibility, courage, and force, takes part with the injured, and affords them effectual support against their oppressors. An helpless, timid female, assaulted and insulted, is an object of peculiar concern to a brave and generous spirit; and for this reason, courage and intrepidity are qualities in men held in great and just estimation by the female sex.

If the heroic behaviour of Moses merits approbation and respect, the modest reserve of the virgin daughters of Raguel, is equally amiable and praiseworthy. It does not appear that they solicited protection, but modestly received it; they look their thanks rather than utter them; and they deem it more suitable to their sex and character to appear ungrateful to a generous stranger, than to offend him by forwardness and indelicacy. They hasten home to their father, who, surprised at the earliness of their return, inquires into the cause of it. Happy, no doubt, to celebrate the praises of a man whose appearance and behaviour must have made a deep impression upon them, they relate the adventure of

the morning; and Raguel, struck with the magnanimity, gallantry, and spirit of this stranger's conduct, eagerly inquires after him, sends to find him out, invites him to his house and table, and endeavours to express that gratitude which the young women could not, by every effort of kindness and hospitality.

Minds so well assorted as those of Moses and Jethro, and attracted to each other by mutual acts of beneficence, would easily assimilate, and unite in friendship. And the pleasing recollection of protection given and received, the natural sensibility of a female mind to personal accomplishments, but more especially to generosity and courage, on the one hand, and the irresistible charm of feminine beauty and modesty to a manly heart, on the other, would speedily and insensibly, between Moses and some one of the priest of Midian's fair daughters, ripen into love. What follows, therefore, is all in the course of honest Nature, which never swerves from her purpose, never fails to accomplish her end. But it was Providence that furnished the field, and the instruments with which Nature should work. That Providence which saved him forty years before from perishing in the Nile; that Providence which delivered him so lately from the hands of an incensed king; the same Providence now, by a concurrence of circumstances equally beyond the reach of human power or foresight, fixes the bounds of his habitation, forms for him the most important connexion of human life, and for another space of forty years,

·makes him forget the tumultuous pleasures of a court, in the more calm and rational delights of disinterested friendship, virtuous affection, and heavenly contemplation.

It was in this delicious retreat, that the man of God is supposed to have composed, by divine inspiration, and to have committed to writing, that most ancient, most elegant, and most instructive of all books ; which contains the history of the world, from the creation down to his own times : a period which no other writer has presumed to touch upon ; holy ground, which none but the foot of God himself has dared to tread. Here also, and at this time, as it is conjectured by interpreters, he wrote that beautifully poetical, moral, and historical work, the Book of Job : which, for sublimity of thought, force of expression, justness of sentiment, strength of reasoning, and variety of matter, holds a distinguished place in the sacred code. If from the schools of the Magi he drew such stores of wisdom and eloquence, high must our ideas rise of those noble seminaries of learning. But Moses derived his wonderful accomplishments from a much higher source ; even from the everlasting spring of all knowledge, even from Him who made the heavens and the earth and caused the light to arise ; even from Him who can make the desert of Horeb a school of wisdom, and the simple to be wiser than all his teachers. Here, also, he has the felicity of becoming a father ; and even in Midian God builds up one of the families of Israel.

And now, at last, the time to favour that despised; oppressed nation was come. Egypt had changed its sovereign in the mean time, but the seed of Jacob had felt no mitigation of their distress. Every change which they have undergone is only from evil to worse. Moses was now arrived at his eightieth year, but remained in the full vigour of his bodily strength, and of his mental powers. Erring, reasoning, cavilling man will be asking, Why was the employment of Moses in so important a service so long delayed? Wherefore bury such talents for such a space of time, in the inglorious life of an obscure shepherd? Wherefore call a man, at so late a period of life, in the evening of his day, in the decline of his faculties, to a service that required all the fervour, intrepidity, and exertion of youth? To all which we answer in the words of our Saviour, on a well-known occasion, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Man is perpetually in a hurry, and often hastens forward without making progress; but "he that believeth shall not make haste." God, the father of believers, advances to his end, not in a vehement and hurried step, but in a solemn, steady, majestic pace; his progress, which we may in our folly account slow, in the issue proves to have been the most expeditious; and the course which human ignorance may condemn as irregular and circuitous, will be found, in the end, the shortest and the surest.

The course of the history, then, has brought us

to that important, eventful hour, when the shepherd of Midian, trained up in retirement and contemplation and converse with God, was to shake off his disguise, and stand confessed the minister of the most high God, the king in Jeshurun, the scourge of Egypt, the deliverer of Israel. As the commission which was given him to execute, and the station assigned to him, were altogether singular and uncommon, we are not to be surprised if the seal and signature affixed to that commission, and the powers bestowed for the faithful and effectual execution of it, should likewise be out of the usual course of things, and should announce the power and authority of Him who granted it. But as this merits a principal place in the course of these exercises, it must not be compressed into the conclusion of a Lecture ; but shall be reserved as the subject of next Lord's day.

Such was Moses, the Jewish legislator and hero, during the first two great periods of his life. But a greater than Moses is here, even He, " the latchet " of whose shoes Moses is unworthy to stoop down " and unloose : " to whom Moses and Elias, on the mount of transfiguration, brought all their glory and honour, and laid them at his feet !

Moses " refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ; " and Jesus disdained not to be called " the Son of the carpenter." Supreme, all divine though HE was, yet he declined not the society of the poorest, meanest, most afflicted of mankind !

Was the humiliation of Moses cheerful and volun-

tary ; not forcibly obtruded upon him, but sought out and submitted to ? Christ, though “ in the form
“ of God, and who thought it not robbery to be
“ equal with God, yet made himself of no reputa-
“ tion, and took upon him the form of a servant.”
Was sympathy a leading feature in the character of
Moses ? Jesus “ hath not despised nor abhorred the
“ affliction of the afflicted ; neither hath he hid his
“ face from him, but when he cried unto him, he
“ heard.” “ In all their affliction he was afflicted,
“ and the angel of his presence saved them ; in his
“ love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare
“ them, and carried them all the days of old.” Did
Moses through the vale of obscurity arrive at the
summit of glory ? Of Christ it is said, as following
up the scene of his humiliation, “ Wherefore God
“ also hath highly exalted him, and given him a
“ name which is above every name : that, at the
“ name of JESUS, every knee should bow, of things
“ in heaven, and things in earth, and things under
“ the earth : and that every tongue should confess,
“ that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the
“ Father.” But the time would fail to point out
every mark of resemblance. Christ derives no glory
from similitude to Moses ; but all the glory of Moses
flows from his typifying Christ, the Lord, in whom
“ all the promises are yea and amen ;” “ and who
“ is the end of the Law for Righteousness to every
“ one that believeth.”

LECTURE XII.

EXODUS III. 13, 14.

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your Fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

THE objects presented to us in the commerce of the world have a relative greatness; but those with which we converse in solitude and retirement possess a real grandeur and magnificence. A vast city, a numerous and well-disciplined army, a proud navy, a splendid court, and the like, dazzle the eyes of a stranger, and produce a transient wonder and delight. But a little acquaintance dissolves the charm; the dimensions of created greatness speedily contract, the glory departs, and what once filled us with astonishment is regarded with calm indifference, perhaps with disgust. The eye, almost with a single glance, reaches the end of human perfection, and instantly turns from what it has seen, in search of something yet undiscovered, striving to find in novelty and variety a compensation for the poverty, littleness, nothingness of the creature. But when

we withdraw from the haunts of men, and either retire within ourselves, or send our thoughts abroad to contemplate God and his works, we meet a height and a depth which the line of finite understanding cannot fathom; we expatiate in a region which still discloses new scenes of wonder; we feel ourselves at once invited and checked, attracted and repelled; we behold much that we can comprehend and explain, but much more that passeth knowledge; we find ourselves, like Moses at the bush, upon "holy ground," and the same wonderful sight is exhibited to our view—"JEHOVAH!" IN A FLAME OF FIRE!—whose light irradiates and encourages our approach, but whose fervent heat arrests our speed, and remands us to our proper distance.

That great man had now passed the second great period of his life in the humble station of a shepherd, and the shepherd too of another man's flock. He had quitted the enchanted regions of high life, not only without regret, but with joy; not impelled by spleen, not soured by disappointment, but filled with a noble disdain for empty honours, with generous sympathy towards his afflicted brethren, animated by exalted piety, which settled on an invisible God, and inspired with a soul which looked at pomp with contempt, and on obscurity with acquiescence and desire. It was in this calm retreat that he cultivated those qualities which proved more favourable to the designs of Providence than all the learning which he had acquired in Egypt.

At the age of eighty the race of glory is at an

end with most men : nay, the drama of life concludes with the generality long before that period arrives. But the fame, activity, and usefulness of Moses commenced not till then ; for as it is never too early, so it is never too late to serve God, and to do good to men ; and true wisdom consists in waiting for, and following the call of heaven, not in anticipating and out-running it. Abraham was turned out a wanderer and an exile at seventy-five : and Moses, at fourscore, was sent upon an enterprise which it required much courage to undertake, much vigour to conduct and support, and a great length of time to execute. But before the divine mandate every mountain of difficulty sinks, “ every valley is exalted, the crooked become straight, “ and the rough places plain.” Abraham, at the head of a handful of servants, subdues five victorious kings, with their armies : Sarah, at ninety, bears a son ; and Moses, at eighty, with a simple rod in his hand, advances to succour Israel, and to crush the power of Egypt.

The solemnity with which the commission was given suited the dignity and importance of the undertaking. The whole was of God, and HE does every thing in a manner worthy of himself. While Moses was employed in the innocent cares and labours of his lowly station, (and faithful attention to the duties of our several stations is the best preparation for the visits of the Almighty,) a very unusual and unaccountable appearance presented itself to his eyes. A bush wholly involved in flames,

yet continuing unchanged, undiminished, unconsumed by the fire. Whether nature preserves her steady tenour, or suffers an alteration or suspension of the laws by which she is usually governed, the finger of God is equally visible in both; for what power save that which is divine could have established, and can maintain, the order and harmony of the universe? And what power short of Omnipotence can break in upon that order? What other power can make the sun to stand still, or its shadow return back to the meridian after it had declined; can leave to fire its illuminating, but withdraw its devouring quality; and render artificial fire, such as that of Neubuchadnezzar's furnace, harmless to the three children of the captivity, but fatal to the ministers of the king of Babylon? Were our hearts right with God, miraculous interpositions would be unnecessary; every creature, every event should promote our acquaintance with our Maker. And such is the condescension of the Most High, that he vouchsafes to cure our ignorance, inattention, or unbelief, by making the mighty sacrifice of that stated course of things, which his wisdom settled at first, and which his power continues to support. Rather than man shall remain unchanged, unredeemed, the great system of nature shall undergo alteration: fire shall cease to burn, the Nile shall run blood instead of water, the sun forget to shine for three days together; the eternal uncreated Word shall become flesh, and the fountain of life to all shall expire in death.

It required not the sagacity of a Moses to discover that there was something extraordinary here. But mistaking it, at first, for merely an unusual, natural appearance, whose cause, by a closer investigation, he might be able to discover, he is preparing by nearer observation to satisfy his curiosity : when lo ! to his still greater astonishment, the bush becomes vocal as well as brilliant, and he hears his own name distinctly and repeatedly called out of the midst of the flame. Curiosity and wonder are now checked by a more powerful principle than either. Terror thrills in every vein, and arrests his trembling steps. How dreadful must the visitation of God's anger be to his enemies, if to his best beloved children the intimations of his goodness, clothed in any thing like sensible glory, be so awful and overwhelming ? When I meet thee, O my God, stripped of this veil of flesh, may I find thee a pure, a genial, and lambent flame of loving-kindness, not a consuming fire of wrath and vengeance !

Moses instantly comprehends that the Lord was there ; or, if he could for a moment have doubted who it was that talked with him, in a moment his doubt must have been removed by the continuation of the voice of Him who spake. We find here, as in many other places of the Old Testament, the same person who is styled in the course of the narration, the "Angel of the Lord," styling himself JEHOVAH and God ; exercising divine prerogatives, manifesting divine perfections, and claiming the homage which is due to Deity alone. The person therefore, thus

described, can be none other than the uncreated "Angel of the Covenant," who, "at sundry times, and in divers manners," in maturing the work of Redemption, assumed a sensible appearance; and at length, in the fulness of time, united his divine nature to ours, and dwelt among men, and made them "to behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Every thing here is singular, and every thing instructive. The first interview between God and Moses inspires terror; but the spirit of bondage gradually dies away, and refines into the spirit of adoption and love. Acquaintance begets confidence, "perfect love casteth out fear;" and the man who spake to God with trembling, in Horeb, by and by becomes strengthened to endure his presence forty days and nights together, in Sinai. "Enduring, as seeing Him who is invisible," he "despised the wrath of an earthly king." When he comes to the knowledge of that same God, by the seeing of the eye, and the hearing of the ear, he "exceedingly fears and quakes; abhors himself, and lies low in dust and ashes." But, following on to know the Lord, he comes at length to converse with Him, as a man with his friend. "Acquaint thyself then with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee." Miserable beyond expression, beyond thought, are they whose acquaintance with God has to begin at death; who having lived without a gracious, merciful, long-suffering God, in the

world, find they must, by a dreadful necessity, fall into the hands of a neglected, forgotten, righteous, incensed Judge, when they leave it.

The appearance of Jehovah in the bush was not only preternatural but emblematical; it not only sanctioned the commission given to Moses by the seal of Deity, but exhibited a lively representation of the state of his church and people in Egypt; oppressed but not crushed, brought low but not deserted of Heaven, in the midst of flames but not consumed. And it is a striking emblem of the Church of God in the world to the end of time: "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

The same voice which solicited intercourse with Moses, which tendered friendship, which encouraged hope, sets a fence about the Divine Majesty; it reminds him of his distance, of his impurity; it forbids rashness, presumption, familiarity. In veneration of the spot which God had honoured with his special presence, he is commanded to "put off his shoes from off his feet:" A mandate which, by an image natural and obvious, enjoins the drawing near to God in holy places, and in sacred services, with seriousness, attention, and reverence; divested of that impurity which men necessarily contract by coming into frequent contact with the world. And surely it is owing to the want of a due sense of the majesty of God upon our spirits, that his house is profaned, and his service marred

by levity, carelessness, and inattention. Did we seriously consider that the place where we stand is "holy ground," that the word which we speak and hear is "not the word of men, but of the living God," could one short hour's attendance betray us into slumber? Could the little jealousies and strife of a base world intrude into a worshipping heart? Could the eye find leisure to wander upon the dress and appearance of another? Durst a scornful leer or simpering countenance communicate from one vain, silly, irreverent spirit to another the private sneer and censure? Would there be a contention for place and pre-eminence? Now surely God is as really, though less sensibly, in this place, as he was in the bush at Horeb: And though we see him not, his eyes are continually upon us, and he will bring every thing into judgment. O Lord, open thou our eyes, that we may behold Thee, and every other object shall instantly disappear.

The words which follow, if any thing can increase their intrinsic force and importance, derive a peculiar energy and value, to the Christian world, as the passage quoted by our blessed Lord, from an authority which they could not deny, to confute the Sadducees on the subject of the Immortality of the Soul, and the Resurrection of the Body. "I AM the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." We speak of the dead under the idea that they were; but God represents them as still existing, and his relation to them as un-

broken, his care of them as uninterrupted. The effect which this declaration had upon Moses is such as might have been expected ; no more " turning aside to see this great sight ;" he hides his face, " afraid to look upon God." It is ignorance of God, not intimate communion, which encourages forwardness and freedom. Angels, who know him best, and love him most, are most sensible of their distance, and are represented as " covering their faces " with their wings" when they approach their dread Creator.

In the declaration which immediately follows, under a sanction so solemn and affecting, which shall we most admire, the mercy and goodness of God, or his perfect wisdom and foreknowledge ? Four hundred years had elapsed since this wretched state of his posterity had been foretold and revealed to Abraham. For wise and gracious purposes it was appointed and brought to pass. But the days of darkness are now almost ended, and the sun returns. Like rain from heaven to a dry and thirsty land, the promises of favour and salvation fall upon a persecuted, oppressed people ; and, " that Moses whom they " refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a " judge ? " is after an interval of forty years sent back to Egypt, on the kind and merciful errand of salvation to an oppressed and persecuted people.

Moses, however, it would appear, has not forgotten the surly reception which his well-meant interposition had met with from his brethren, so long before ; and presumes to urge it as a reason why a

person of more influence and authority should be intrusted with the commission.

He considered not that formerly he acted from the impulse of his own mind; with indeed an upright and benevolent intention, but with a zeal rather too bold and impetuous; whereas now he was following the direction of Providence, and was therefore certain of success. As there is a sinful pride, which urges men to seek stations and employments to which they have neither pretension, title, nor qualification, so there is a sinful humility, which shrinks from the call of God, which, in the guise of self-denial, contains the spirit of rebellion and disobedience; and which, under the affectation of undervaluing and debasing our own persons and qualities, indirectly charges God with foolishness in choosing an instrument so inapt and improper. Such humility is of the very essence of pride, and such, with regret we observe it, was the spirit by which Moses was on this occasion actuated. The heavenly vision removes the objection at once, by assuring him of the Divine presence, blessing, and support; and refers him for the proof of it to a train of events closely succeeding each other; and all issuing in the people's assembling together in that very spot to worship, after their enfranchisement, all forming a chain of evidence that the authority under which he acted was divine.

Still doubting and irresolute Moses ventures to urge another difficulty, which he expresses in these terms, "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when

"I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say
"unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent
"me unto you : and they shall say to me, What is
"his name? what shall I say unto them?" God
had already declared his name and purpose, and
given his charge, and yet Moses dares to make
inquiry. How rare a thing it is to see a soul wholly
resolved into the will of God! How seldom do we
find a faith entirely disposed to be, to do, and to
endure, neither more nor less than what God is pleas-
ed to appoint! But the incredulity and presump-
tion of Moses shall not render the design of God of
none effect. When men are contradicted or opposed
they fly out, and storm, and threaten. But the
great God bears with our frowardness and folly,
gives way to our scruples, and, yielding to our
obstinacy, overcomes evil with good. And we are
almost tempted to rejoice that Moses stood out so
long, as it gave occasion to the most solemn and
satisfying proclamation of the name and nature of
God from his own mouth, and the most amiable
and engaging picture of tender mercy and long-suf-
fering that ever was exhibited. "And God said
"unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: And he said,
"Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel,
"I AM hath sent me unto you."

What flimsy things are commissions issued under
the hand-writing and seals of kings compared to
this! A shred of parchment, a morsel of wax, an
unmeaning scrawl; a slender, contracted, short-
lived power, delegated from one worm to another.

Where is now the signet of Ahasuerus which pretended to communicate irreversible authority to the writing whereto it was affixed? Where are the warrants under which the statesmen and heroes of other times deliberated, fought, and conquered? With the princes who granted them, they are gone to oblivion. They *were* what they *were*. They fulfilled their day, and then they fell asleep, and now are seen no more! What avail the long list of empty titles which potentates and princes, in the pride of their hearts, affix to their perishing names? All, all shrink and fade before that tremendous Power whose authority no change of circumstances can affect, whose existence no succession of ages can impair; who, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, still proclaims of himself, "I AM."

Nothing can equal the simplicity, sublimity, and force of these remarkable words. Independency of existence, eternity of duration, immutability of purpose, faithfulness, and truth in keeping covenant and showing mercy, are all conveyed in one little sentence, "I AM THAT I AM." Longinus, the celebrated critic, has with equal judgment and taste quoted a well-known passage from the writings of Moses, as an instance of the true sublime, namely, the first words pronounced by the Creator in the formation of the world, "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." Why did not Longinus dip deeper into the works of this great historian? Why did he not enrich and embellish his own beautiful little book, and farther approve his exquisite taste,

by inserting other passages from the page of inspiration, particularly the passage under review? A passage which Jews, Heathens, and Christians, as one man, have consented to admire.

Under the sanction of this most awful name God repeats his commission, repeats his charge, repeats his promise of support, assistance, and success; success with the elders of Israel; success with the people; success against Pharaoh. And yet Moses "staggers at this promise," although it be the promise of the Eternal, "through unbelief!" What have we most to wonder at here, the strange incredulity and perverseness of the *prophet*, or the singular fidelity and exactness of the *historian* in recording his own errors? GOD had said, "They shall hearken to thy voice:" yet Moses presumes, in the face of this express declaration, to gainsay and draw back—"And Moses answered, and said, But behold, they *will* not believe me; nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee." Surely "the LORD is GOD, and not man, and therefore the children of men are not consumed." A man of common spirit would here have broken off the conference, and left the timid, froward shepherd to his own folly, and permitted him to remain destitute of the honour which he obstinately persevered to decline. But it pleased God to show us patience, at least in one instance, too powerful for unbelief: "for his ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts."

He who would cure infidelity in others, must first be purged of the old leaven himself. To effect this in the heart of his servant Moses, God vouchsafes to perform miracle upon miracle. He turns the rod which was in the hand of Moses into a serpent; and from a serpent to a rod again: in order to intimate to him, and to the world, that the most harmless things become noxious, and the most pernicious things innocent, at his command. His hand is in a moment covered with leprosy, and in a moment restored—to show the power of God's holy law, to fix guilt upon the sinner, and of his grace, to remove it from the penitent. He is enjoined and authorized to perform those signs before all Israel, in order to produce that conviction in them which they had first wrought upon his own mind. Should these still happen to fail, he is permitted to go a step farther. Nature shall submit to a thorough alteration, rather than the seed of faithful Abraham continue slaves in Egypt, or perish through unbelief. Water shall become blood before their eyes, rather than the blood of their innocent children be poured out any more like water upon the ground.

And now surely Moses is gained, and the work of God shall no longer stand still. Alas! the sulen spirit is not yet subdued. Though forced to retreat he continues to fight as he retires. The slowness of Israel to believe was formerly the plea; now his own want of talents is urged in excuse of his strange backwardness and disobedience. That objection too is immediately removed, by a promise of

wisdom and eloquence suited to the occasion. The language of the oracle and the long-suffering of the speaker are miraculous and supernatural, as all the other circumstances of the case. "And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

"Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!" This, instead of producing humble submission and instantaneous compliance, without a reason and without a plea, meets with a direct refusal; "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send." And now what heart does not tremble for fear, that the fire which had spared the bush, should wax hot to punish the madness of the prophet? What patience can endure such a repetition of insult? The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses; and—and what? O it becomes a flame of love to melt his heart, and purify it of its dross. "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also behold, he cometh forth to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart." Providence had all this while been preparing a concluding, a convincing proof of power, wisdom, and goodness inconceivable. Lo, Aaron is already far advanced on his way from Egypt in quest of his brother.

That after so long an interval, through a field of so many chances, he should at that very instant of time arrive—How is it to be accounted for? On no other principle but this, the Lord is “wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” “He seeth the end from the beginning.” He saith, “My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure.” “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” Let every knee bow, let every tongue confess, let every heart adore, and love, and submit.

Moses is at length subdued; and we stand with astonishment and joy to contemplate the triumph of mercy over judgment. God grant we may improve the example of his divine patience as a pattern. God in mercy preserve us from presuming upon it, as an encouragement to offend. And may God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

LECTURE XIII.

EXODUS VI. 9.

And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

EVERY nation has in its history events of peculiar importance, which latest posterity is disposed fondly to commemorate. But the memory of remarkable deliverances is necessarily blended with the recollection of heavy distress, or imminent danger; and whether as men, or as citizens, we greatly rejoice, by that very joy we expressly declare that we, or our fathers, once had cause to mourn. Perpetual sunshine suits not the state of the natural world; perpetual success is by no means favourable either to human happiness or virtue. Hunger is necessary to give a relish to food; the gloom of winter is the happiest recommendation of the cheerfulness and bloom of spring. We discover the value of health by disease; and the blessings of peace would be but half understood, were it not for the antecedent anxieties and calamities of war. Men therefore act foolishly, as well as impiously, when they charge the wise, righteous, and merciful Governor of the World, with carelessness or unkindness, because he admits into the system of his

works, or into his moral government of the universe, what ignorance calls disorder, what presumption cries down as unnecessary, and what pride condemns as unjust.

What so irregular, at first sight, and always so to the vulgar eye, as the face of the starry heavens? A handful of little sparks, scattered at random in the air! But to the attentive, inquiring, enlightened spirit, they present a vast combination of worlds, each in its place, every one moving in its proper orbit; the whole possessing every quality that can at once excite astonishment and inspire delight; greatness, order, beauty, harmony, utility! They present excellencies obvious to the slightest observation of the most shallow understanding; excellencies undiscoverable by the closest investigation of the most penetrating genius. Now, clownish thoughtlessness and stupidity are not more incompetent to judge of the order and frame of nature, than passion and prejudice, by which all men are governed, are to determine upon the wisdom and goodness of the ways of Providence. Every man would have every thing bend to his humour, conveniency, indolence, or interest. This would produce, were it permitted, endless confusion and misery; did not God over-rule and employ the activity and the indolence, the senseless caprices and the jarring interests of men, to execute his purposes, and, without their intention, nay in spite of their efforts, make them productive of regularity, stability, and happiness.

In contemplating, therefore, agents and events,

those of which we have heard and read; or those which we see and in which we are concerned, the only road to composure and improvement is to consider the whole as the work of a supreme, intelligent, almighty, invisible Agent, who is carrying on a plan which we comprehend not, or which we understand only in part; and who, from all that we can know of him, from nature, from experience, and from revelation, takes delight in showing mercy and doing good; but who, in the exercise of even these gracious prerogatives, governs not himself by the partial lights, hasty conceptions, and contracted views of ignorant, erring men, but by his own all-comprehending intelligence, all-pervading benignity, all-subduing love.

If in that portion of ancient history which is now to come under our consideration, we observe Providence treating one nation with uncommon severity, and another with indulgence altogether as singular, we are to regard the parties not as they are in themselves, or in relation to each other, but in their relation to God, and to mankind in general; as an important link in the great chain of Providence, as serving and instructing the human race to the end of the world. The perverseness and unbelief of Moses met with pity and forgiveness, and were cured by a series of miracles. The impiety and unbelief of Pharaoh meet with resentment and punishment; and were even confirmed and strengthened, by a most awful series of miracles; not for the sake of Moses and Pharaoh merely, but to il-

illustrate, in the eyes of the whole world, the goodness and severity of God; the wisdom and safety of repentance and submission on the one hand, the madness and danger of impenitence on the other. Egypt was plagued and Israel saved, that violence and cruelty might be awakened to see the naked sword of justice suspended by a single hair over its guilty throat; and that misery and depression might find a refuge from despair.

We have seen with what solemnity the commission to Moses for the deliverance of Israel was granted, and the awful seal which was appended to it: even the great and fearful name JEHOVAH, I AM "THAT I AM." We have seen the backwardness, irresolution, and timidity of the prophet, in undertaking an employment so flattering to ambition, so desirable to the spirit of patriotism, so elevating to a mind awake to the influence of religion. We have seen the goodness and condescension of God, in deigning, by repeated exertions of power and mercy, to remove the scruples and level the objections of incredulity and fear. And we have seen Aaron, the brother of Moses, providentially conducted to the spot, and at the moment, to establish a belief in the Divine power and veracity, to confirm the wavering trembling soul: and constituted to a share of the diligence, difficulty, danger, and glory of the illustrious enterprise.

Behold then two plain old men, one of eighty, and the other of eighty-three years old, setting out from the deserts of Arabia, on an undertaking, to

human reason, the most wild and romantic that ever was attempted: to persuade, or to constrain, one of the most powerful princes of the world, to enfranchise, nay to dismiss, the tenth part of his most valuable and useful subjects! And how are they provided for this vast undertaking? The pleas of reason, the powers of eloquence, the calls of humanity, the claims of justice, it is well known, make but a feeble impression on the hearts of kings, when their pride, ambition, or interest oppose. For such a vast multitude to slip away by stealth is impossible; and to think of forcing an escape from a power so greatly superior, is rashness and ruin. When *men* engage in hazardous and difficult expeditions, they levy armies, accumulate treasure, provide magazines, strengthen themselves with alliances. But when God addresses himself to action we behold no apparatus, no effort. Is an universe to start out of nothing? “God *speaks*, and it is done.” Is a sun to arise, and light to shine? God says, “Let there be light.” Is a great nation to be subdued, and a little one asserted into liberty? Our eyes are directed not to a general at the head of a mighty host, but to a shepherd with his crook in his hand.

But the commands of Heaven break not in upon the sacred duties and the virtuous charities of private life. The charge given to Moses was pressing, the object most important, and the authority under which it was issued supreme; but yet he is permitted to return for a little while, to attend to the calls of nature, of gratitude; to the gentle claims of

filial piety, of conjugal and paternal affection. He went back to his father-in-law, to acknowledge his protection, hospitality, and kindness to him when a stranger: to inform him of the extraordinary commission which he had just received, and of the necessity he was thereby laid under, to immediately enter upon the execution of it; to obtain his consent for this purpose, and to ask his paternal benediction. Religion is in a happy state in the soul of that man who has learned to unite and reconcile the views and pursuits of the citizen with those of the private man; who pleads not the performance of one duty as an excuse for the omission of another; whose life exhibits every moral and divine principle in action, every one in his season, every one in his place. How simple and affectionate is the dismissal which honest Raguel gave to Moses, compared to that of the selfish, rapacious Laban to Jacob. "Go in peace!" says Raguel; an adieu expressive, at once, of submission to the will of Providence, and of affection to his son-in-law, mixed with regret at the thought of parting with him.

It pleased God again to confirm the confidence of Moses, by assuring him that all who had ever harboured a design against his life were now dead; and that nothing therefore remained but to address himself boldly to his great work. Accompanied with his wife and two sons, he leaves the land of Midian, and proceeds towards Egypt.

On this journey a very extraordinary incident oc-

curs : but the conciseness of the sacred history leaves it involved in much darkness and difficulty. God had blessed him with two sons in Midian, whom, in compliance with the commandment of God, and as a son of Abraham, he ought to have circumcised on the eighth day from their birth. This, however, either for want of the proper minister, from inattention, or out of improper respect to the feelings or prejudices of Zipporah, his wife, or some other reason that appears not, had been hitherto wholly neglected ; and thereby his children, the youngest at least, through his neglect seems to have incurred the dreadful penalty denounced by the terms of the covenant against uncircumcised persons, that of being " cut off from his people." This punishment God seems disposed to exact at the hand of Moses himself, who was indeed the guilty person, by attacking him either with a threatening bodily distemper, by remorse of conscience for his criminal neglect, by the appearance of an avenging angel, or some other sensible token of displeasure. But the difficulty is, Why the conduct of Moses, in this respect, was never called in question before ? Why he was not purged of this guilt before he was honoured at all with the divine commission ? Why the precept was enforced upon a journey, and at an inn, where the operation could be performed less commodiously, and was accompanied with some degree of danger ? What could Zipporah mean when she reproached Moses as a " bloody husband ?" The passage is evidently enve-

loped in much obscurity; and probably with design. Instead of curiously inquiring into its hidden meaning, an attempt vain and unprofitable, we may, by the blessing of God, learn from it more than one practical lesson, neither obscure nor unimportant; and this, no doubt, the Spirit of God principally intended. The first is, that no circumstances of prudence or conveniency can ever be, with propriety, urged as a dispensation with a clearly commanded duty. Secondly, that as there may be a sinful undervaluing of the feelings, prejudices, and inclinations of our near and dear relations, so there may be a sinful tenderness for, and compliance with them, to the neglect of God's known and declared will, and at the risk of falling under his just censure. Thirdly, that he who is to be the interpreter of the law to others, ought in all points to be blameless, and in all things conformed to the law himself. To which we may add yet a fourth, not of less importance than any of these; namely, that when God has procured the proper respect to his revealed will, the controversy between him and the offender is at an end, the object of his government being not so much to avenge himself, as to amend the criminal.

This scene of domestic danger and distress is speedily followed by another of a pleasanter kind, namely, the interview between the two brothers in the wilderness; an interview attended with many circumstances to render it mutually interesting and

satisfactory. It must have been highly gratifying to Moses, after living forty years among strangers, to meet his own brother, to receive particular information concerning his family and nation, and to communicate to a friendly ear the knowledge of his own situation during so long an interval. What must it have been, on the other hand, to Aaron, to learn from the mouth of his brother the great designs of Providence respecting themselves and their people? With what overflowings of heart would they mingle their sighs and tears! With what ardour would their united prayers, and vows, and praises ascend to heaven? How confirmed the faith, how forward the zeal of each, strengthened and stimulated by that of the other! They go on their way rejoicing; they are following God, and they must prosper.

Moses had found the evidence of his divine mission completed, in the opportune arrival of his brother Aaron, according to the declaration of the Oracle at the bush; and he soon finds a resolution of his first doubt, in the very entrance upon the discharge of his office. Compare the first, and the two last verses of this 4th chapter, and see what a contrast they form to one another. "And Moses answered, and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee." "And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed:

“ And when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads, and worshipped.” The tremendous name JEHOVAH affixed as a signet to the record, and vouching its authority by sign upon sign, quickly produces belief, and inspires gratitude and joy, corrected by reverence and godly fear. So far then the way is cleared, and Moses is no longer rejected as an upstart and intruder, as presuming to take upon himself the office of prince and judge over his brethren.

But this is the smallest difficulty in the way. Who does not eagerly cleave to the prospect of returning liberty? Men believe things incredible, attempt things impossible, endure things intolerable, when freedom, precious freedom is the object. No wonder then that oppressed, groaning Israel should greedily listen to the voice of this heavenly charmer. But the grand difficulties are yet behind. Their fetters will not fall off by a wish. Their fond desires dictate not the edicts of Pharaoh. The smarting of the strokes of their task-masters' whips is not to be conjured away by a sound. The question is not, Will Israel believe? but, Will the king of Egypt comply? Every step Moses advances he finds a new and growing proof of the truth and faithfulness of God. For the same mouth which declared concerning the children of Israel, “ they shall hearken unto thy voice,” declared concerning Pharaoh, “ I am sure that the king of Egypt will

“not let you go, no not by a mighty hand.” The faith and obedience of the one, therefore, and the insolence and pride of the other, equally and conjointly demonstrated to Moses that the Lord had spoken unto him.

Armed therefore with a command from on high, confident of the goodness of their cause, and exalted above the fear of man, Moses and his brother advance boldly into the presence of the king, and make their requisition in these lofty and majestic words, “Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, Let
“my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me
“in the wilderness.”

In some ancient Jewish fragments we have an account of four miracles by which Moses signalized his entrance into Egypt. First, he made fire to issue out of the earth, in the eyes of all Israel, and thereby produced confidence in him as their deliverer. Secondly, being shut up in prison by order of Pharaoh, he broke the bars, burst open the gates, struck the guards with death, and released himself. Thirdly, he pronounced in the ears of the king the name of JEHOVAH—at the sound of which, that prince became deaf, and after a certain interval recovered his hearing, through the interposition of him who had taken it away. Fourthly, by the use of the same awful Name he deprived all the Egyptian priests of sense and motion. To this the Rabbins add, that on entering the palace of the tyrant, he was suddenly clothed with a dreadful form, and a countenance bright and majestic like that of an angel.

But we have no need to resort to fancy for a description of the magnificence of the scene, neither is there reason to suppose that any part of the glory of Moses consisted in personal lustre. His Employer and his errand lend him sufficient dignity and importance, without the glare which dazzles the eye.

Whatever were the outward appearance of Moses, his message we know was treated by Pharaoh with insolence and contempt, in these words; "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." We are not to conclude that Pharaoh was an atheist from his using this impious language. No: Egypt was a country wholly given to superstition: a land which had multiplied deities to itself. It was JEHOVAH whom he scorned to acknowledge. It was the God of Israel whom he despised. He judged of the power of their Patron and Protector from their own present forlorn condition. ➤

The methods which Moses and Aaron employed, to obtain the end of their mission, is a beautiful, an instructive, and an alarming representation of the conduct of Providence toward sinners in general. They begin with delivering a plain message, in the name of their Master. Being repulsed, they proceed to argue and expostulate. A deaf ear being turned to the voice of reason and humanity, they have recourse to more extraordinary proofs of the weight and authority of their commission; proofs which indeed mark an Almighty arm, but an arm stretched out to convince, not to crush. A bold de-

fiance being given to Omnipotence, what other method of working conviction and of procuring respect is left, but to let it fall with all its dreadful weight on the head of the defier?

It happened to Israel as it often does to men struggling to get free from the pressure of calamity, their efforts only serve to plunge them deeper in the mire; and it happened to Moses and Aaron as it sometimes befalls men actuated by a similar good intention, but with less title and encouragement, their interference hurts those whom it was meant to serve; and they have the mortification of seeing the miseries of their poor brethren cruelly increased, through what might be deemed their own zeal and officiousness. The inflexible tyrant avenges himself for the freedom taken with the king of Egypt, by persons so low and contemptible, upon the bleeding shoulders of thousands of wretches, who could not redress themselves and who durst not complain, Miserable condition indeed! where the caprice of one man determines the fate of millions! Happy the nation where not men but laws govern!

Providence in this instance seems resolved to try how far savage cruelty and patient suffering can go; but ready to interfere in both cases when they have come to the extreme. Israel is not prepared for salvation, till the cup of woe is full, and deliverance is despaired of from every quarter save heaven: and Pharaoh feels not the rod of God's anger till, having filled up the measure of his iniquity, hardened his heart against God and against man, poured con-

tempt upon mercy, and braved infinite justice, he exalts himself into an awful monument, to every impenitent sinner, of the desperate madness of fighting with his Maker.

Moses is ready to sink afresh under this cruel disappointment. The reproaches of the unhappy sufferers, called, forced, lashed into labour, beyond what their strength could bear, cut him to the heart, and again he shrinks from the task which was imposed on him : and in these desponding words he ventures to pour out the anguish of his soul before the Lord, “ Wherefore hast thou so evil entreated
“ this people? why is it that thou hast sent me?
“ For since I came to Pharaoh, to speak in thy
“ name, he hath done evil to this people, neither
“ hast thou delivered thy people at all.”

Thus far has flowed the angry tide of proud imperial passion ; and thus low has ebbed the trembling, retreating stream of baffled expectation. And now, “ It is time, Lord, that thou work ! ” To the one he saith, “ Hitherto shalt thou come, but no
“ farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” To the other, “ Return, and fill all thy channels,
“ and overflow all thy banks.”

The angel of the Lord begins with re-assuring Moses himself, by a recapitulation of the tenour of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, under the sanction of his name as the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY. In all these wanderings, weaknesses, and distresses, they had been encouraged to trust in a Being, omnipotent to protect them ; all-sufficient

to supply their wants. But their posterity were, henceforth, to know him by another name, and under a new description; even the incommunicable, unutterable Name, which denotes eternal, unchangeable, self-existence; deriving nothing from any, but conferring upon all, life, and breath, and all things; who is above all, through all, and in all; "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:" and, of consequence, true to his word, faithful in keeping covenant, unalterable in his decrees!

Under the seal of that most tremendous, most animating and inspiring Name, Moses is again dispatched to the people with the assurance of a speedy, an instantaneous appearance in their behalf. But alas! their spirit is broken by the long continuance and accumulated weight of their calamities. They have been disappointed so often that they can believe, can hope no longer; and the message delivered by Moses is like a charming song upon the ear of a deaf or a dead man. He is sent from the people to Pharaoh with a repetition of the demand of Heaven upon him. But alas! the messenger himself has caught the desponding spirit of the unhappy men whom he had been last visiting; and the heart of Pharaoh has not in the least relented. Heaven seems to have interposed somewhat too late; the cause appears lost. Let us judge nothing rashly; let us not judge before the time. Let us humbly and patiently wait the issue, and then condemn if we dare, if we can.

Moses at the bush saw God under the appearance

of a flame of fire; but no man can see God and live. "No man hath seen God, at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The deliverer of Israel needed himself to be nurtured and prepared for the discharge of his high office; but the Saviour of a lost world entered upon the execution of his infinitely more arduous task, every way qualified to bring it to a happy conclusion. The Jewish law-giver stood himself condemned by the law, and was a partaker with others in guilt and transgression; the Christian Leader was "holy, harmless, and undefiled." Moses undertook the work assigned to him, slowly and reluctantly; but, O with what readiness did the friend of mankind press forward to the perfecting of his kind design; "Lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" And yet there was no shame, no pain, no cross in the way of Moses; whereas the Captain of Salvation was to be "made perfect through sufferings;" nevertheless he advanced undismayed to the combat. "With desire, I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Moses frequently resiled from the conflict, shrunk from the difficulty and danger, failed in the hour of trial; but our great leader and commander went on "conquering and to conquer;" turned not back; desisted not from doing and from suffering,

till he could say, "*It is finished.*" The Sun of Righteousness shineth in his strength, let every star hide his diminished head. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

LECTURE XIV.

EXODUS VI. 1.

Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do unto Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

THE history of the divine conduct is the best illustration of the nature of God. Do we desire to know what the Supreme Being *is*? We have but to consider what he *does*. Are we anxious to be satisfied of the truth of the declarations made by the great JEHOVAH concerning himself in his word? Let us compare them with the history and experience of men in every age. The proofs of the divine goodness and mercy are written in characters so fair, and are so frequently presented to our view, that not to observe them must argue the grossest stupidity and inattention; and not to acknowledge, love, and adore the glorious source of that unbounded goodness, must argue the blackest ingratitude. When the Lord makes himself known by the *judgments* which he executes; we see him advancing, to use the ideas and the language of men, with slow and reluctant steps. When misery is to be relieved, benefits conferred, or sins forgiven, the blessing outruns expectation, nay even desire. But

when the wicked are to be punished, justice seems to regret the necessity under which it is laid to maintain itself, and the sinner is not destroyed till, to his own conviction, his condemnation is acquitted of unrighteousness; and till every thing around him calls for vengeance.

The wickedness of the old world was so great that God is said to have "repented that he had made man." Nevertheless after God had threatened to destroy the human race with a deluge, a reprieve of many years is granted, in order to afford space and means for averting the calamity by repentance. Abraham was permitted, nay encouraged, to intercede for the sinful, the devoted cities of the plain of Jordan; and the righteousness of so small a number as *five* persons would have saved the whole people of those regions. The nations of Canaan were not expelled to make way for Israel, till the measure of their iniquity was full; and the haughty spirit of Pharaoh was not brought low, by wonder upon wonder, by plague upon plague, till he had hardened his heart against the power of God, and the sufferings of men, and thereby made himself a "vessel of wrath fitted for destruction."

The awful scene which we are this night to contemplate is in more respects than one singular and unexampled. We are not only presented with a series of miracles, a demonstration of the tremendous power of Almighty God, but, what is still more extraordinary, they are a series of miracles all marked with uncommon rigour and severity. The

wise and righteous Governor of the world seems, in this instance, to have deviated from the usual lenity of his proceeding; as if determined to make men tremble before him, and to stand in awe of his power and justice, as well as to hope in his mercy.

Moses and Aaron, though their former embassy to Pharaoh had met with a reception so mortifying to themselves, and so fatal to their afflicted brethren, are obliged and encouraged at God's command to undertake a second. And the haughty tyrant having dared to reject the first, as delivered in the name of an unknown God, they are now furnished with credentials which carried their own authority on their foreheads, and which were calculated to convince every thing but rooted infidelity, of the divine power by which they were issued. First, they make reason speak. And had Pharaoh been wise no other monitor had been necessary. But a deaf ear being turned to that meek and heavenly charmer, it becomes needful to employ a stronger and more forcible language. Being again introduced, they again deliver their message, and are again treated with scorn. Aaron, as he was commanded, having the rod of God in his hand, casts it upon the ground before Pharaoh and his court, and lo! it instantly becomes animated; it is converted into a serpent armed with deadly poison. When Moses first beheld this strange sight, he "was afraid and would have fled:" but Pharaoh appears not in the least alarmed. The same fire melts wax and hardens clay; the same doctrine is the savour of life unto

life in them that believe, and of death unto death in them that perish.

Some interpreters have alleged, that this transformation was not only miraculous but emblematical : and that it was intended to humble this tyrannical and sanguinary prince, by exhibiting a representation of his own character, and of his subserviency to the power of that God whom he had presumed to defy. What a sudden and striking change, through the permission of Providence, takes place ! A harmless rod, or shepherd's crook, the emblem of mild, wise, and good government, is changed into a poisonous snake, the emblem of cruelty and oppression. And lo, at the divine pleasure, the poison is again extracted, the deadly tooth is plucked out, and the fiery serpent becomes a harmless rod again. And thus, in general, afflictive providences are either the gentle rod of a wise father to admonish, to correct, and to reform, or the keen two-edged sword of an adversary, to cleave asunder, to devour, and to destroy. Whether this were intended or not, it is evident Pharaoh understood it not, or disregarded it. And as infidelity is always desirous of fortifying itself by something that has the semblance of reason, and, while it pretends to doubt of every thing, is in truth the most simple and credulous principle in the world, Pharaoh affects to treat the miracle which was wrought by Moses and Aaron as a mere trick, a feat of necromancy or magic. He calls for such of his own people as professed these arts, to confront them with the Israelitish ambas-

sadors, in order to oppose skill to skill, and to diminish the respect and attention claimed by Moses and Aaron, to their mission, and to their God, by showing similar or equal signs, performed by Jannes and Jambres, the votaries of an Egyptian deity.

The magicians confidently undertake the task, and, through the permission of Heaven, they partly succeed. Their rods cast upon the ground likewise become serpents. The heart of Pharaoh exults, and the magicians of Egypt laugh the Jewish shepherds to scorn. But the triumph of unbelief is only for a moment. Aaron's rod, in its serpent state, swallowed up their rods. Reasoning man will ask, Why were not impiety and infidelity checked in their very first attempt? Why were the demons of Egypt left in possession of the slightest vestige of power, to oppose or to imitate the mighty power of God? Why grant to Pharaoh, and to his magicians, even the momentary triumph of their incantations? The reason is obvious. Had the Egyptian enchantments been attended with no success, and produced no effect, infidelity would have had its plea at hand. "Your pretended miracle is mere illusion, it is an attempt to mislead our understanding by imposing upon our senses. Though we cannot produce this particular effect, or perform this particular trick by our art, we can effect wonders equally or much more astonishing." But by being permitted to succeed in their first effort, and to rival Moses and Aaron so far in power and reputation, they are in-

sensibly drawn in to give their sanction to the sign performed by the Hebrews, for the sake of their own credit ; and no sooner is it stamped for currency, with their image and superscription, than they and their abettors are confounded, by seeing the wretched impression of their art effaced, absorbed, annihilated, and no image remains visible but that of the living and true God. The Power which swallowed up the magicians' rods could as easily have prevented the transmutation ; but the confutation is much more complete by the one, than it would have been by the other. Impiety has shut her own mouth, and infidelity stands stripped of her last and only plea.

An opportunity is here presented of instituting an inquiry, which has greatly employed and violently divided the learned and ingenious ; namely, Whether the supernatural effects, here, and elsewhere in Scripture, ascribed to the agency of demons and malignant spirits, through the practice of magical arts, were real miracles, that is, alterations of the known and established laws of nature, by the permission of God, or only dexterous impositions, practised by subtle artists, on the simple and credulous, giving the appearance of reality to what had no existence ? We shall not take upon us to determine whether of these two opinions is most conformable to reason, and to the analogy of faith. But the opportunity having offered, we shall take the liberty of suggesting some considerations, tending less to settle the question, than to show that perhaps

it is not capable of a solution. But our grand aim shall be to show, that, whichever side men are pleased to take, the miracles wrought in support of truth, through the agency of the Author of all good, preserve all their superiority, and the truth itself shines in all its lustre. •

And, first, if we try the cause by the *letter* of the narration of Moses, it will immediately strike every reader that these extraordinary feats were actually produced by the power of the devil. The history relates the change that passed on the magicians' rods in the self-same terms which describe the transmutation of Aaron's; and the name given to these execrable men is the same that belongs to persons who have devoted themselves to the wicked one. On the other hand we know that Scripture, in describing natural objects, usually accommodates itself to the prevailing notions of the ages and nations in which the inspired authors lived and wrote; that it condescends even to adopt the language, the ideas, and the prejudices of the vulgar; and that it employs not the accurate language and just ideas of philosophy, but those of common life, in treating the greatest and most important subjects. We thence conclude, that whether the enchantments of the magicians produced real miracles, or were deceptions merely, the Spirit of God would certainly have narrated the fact in the self-same terms. From the letter of the Sacred History, therefore, we can draw no conclusive argument for either side of the question.

We shall have equal reason to suspend our judgment, if we try, secondly, to decide it by the relations transmitted to us, from various ages and regions of the world, concerning real or seeming enchantments. It would, perhaps, be as difficult to persuade the men of our own age, that such a thing as witchcraft ever existed, as it would have been to convince our ancestors in some former ages, that most of the effects ascribed to Satan and his agents, had no foundation but in the cunning, dexterity, and knavery of one part of mankind practising on the ignorance, credulity, and simplicity of another. But, as it would betray a silly and ridiculous easiness of belief, on the one hand, to admit as true the ten thousand stories which the times of ignorance devised, related, and believed; and with which our own childhood may have been scared and alarmed; so, it would certainly be an unreasonable and absurd degree of scepticism, on the other, to reject as fabulous every relation of this sort, however well authenticated. Wise and good men have proved, by arguments amounting almost to demonstration, the absurdity of admitting the actual interference of a diabolical power, in order to deceive mankind. And wise and good men, by evidence apparently as clear and satisfactory, have endeavoured to establish the certainty of such interference in particular instances. And this seems a good reason against pronouncing hastily upon the nature of the sorceries practised by the magicians of Egypt.

We shall find ourselves equally in the dark, if we

attempt to form our judgment, in the third place, on metaphysical notions. Our minds are exceedingly limited with respect to all objects, and particularly with respect to the nature of spirits. We know from experience that the soul, little as it comprehends its own nature and essence, has a wonderful influence over every particle of that body to which it is united: but we can form no notion of the power and influence which spirits, of a different order, may possess over larger portions of matter, and even over our bodies, and of consequence over our minds. Much less are we able to conceive what an extent of power the Father of spirits may, for wise purposes, have permitted to evil spirits, over the whole world of nature, which has fallen into disorder, and is labouring under the curse of heaven on account of man's apostasy. The limited nature of human understanding, therefore, likewise forbids us to decide too peremptorily on a subject so obviously involved in difficulty.

Finally, the principles of religion here refuse to lend us their aid. In whatever tends to convey saving light to the soul, or peace to the conscience; in all that relates to the government of the heart, or the wise conduct of the life, Religion is ever at hand, and kindly offers her aid, nay presses it upon us; but in questions of doubtful disputation, in which men rather aim at gratifying a restless curiosity, or wild imagination, than at improving the understanding or mending the heart, Revelation rather checks and represses inquiry, than promises or lends her

assistance. It is sufficient then for our purpose to say, that of whatever nature were the incantations of the Egyptian magicians, and whatever their effects, the God of Truth, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, put his infinite superiority beyond a possibility of doubt ; and extorted an acknowledgment of it from the mouths of the magicians themselves. But though they are put to silence, and Pharaoh is confounded by the miracle of Aaron's rod swallowing up their rods, yet they are not brought to see the insufficiency of their art, neither is he yet reduced to yield obedience to an authority asserted by so high a hand. A miracle, therefore, which only threatened, but continued harmless ; a miracle which proved fatal only to the instruments of sorcery and enchantment, failing to produce compliance, it becomes at length necessary to follow up the remonstrances of reason and humanity, and the evidence of signs, powerful indeed, yet innocent, by the operation of signs that shall be felt ; signs which shall address themselves to the understanding and to the senses at once, and shall force conviction upon the most careless and incredulous.

Their river, the Nile, was the chief ground of glorifying to the Egyptians. It was the ornament of their country, and the source of its fertility. Deriving the moisture necessary to fructification from thence, they vainly boasted that they were independent of the heavens ; standing in no need, like the rest of the world, of the refreshing drops which fall from thence. Egypt therefore is first smitten in the

darling source of its pride; and that which presumptuously put itself in the place of God, first feels the power of God; and becomes, not a cause of vain-glorious boasting, but a loathing and an abomination to its worshippers. Smitten with the awful rod, its waters are instantly, and universally, turned into blood. Horrid change! An inundation of the river too scanty threatened a famine: an inundation too copious threatened a deluge. But, O dreadful reflection! the river no longer flows with that precious refreshing fluid which gives drink and renewed vigour to thirsty man, to thirsty cattle, to the parched ground, but a fluid which taints the air; which excites abhorrence instead of satisfying the appetite; and which kills what it contains, instead of communicating life and fruitfulness wherever it is diffused. And should it rise and swell, what is it? An abominable deluge of blood. Its streams had been often stained with the blood of Hebrew innocents; and its savage master is now punished with seeing its vast channel filled, from shore to shore, with one crimson tide. In this awful glass we are made to see, that whatsoever men exalt in the room of God, and worship as God, will sooner or later become a loathing or a curse to them; and that the instrument of their sin assuredly will be converted, at length, into the instrument of their punishment.

“ And the magicians of Egypt did so with their “ enchantments.” Foolish, unhappy men; to try to increase an evil which was already intolerable! If their art could have done any thing, it had been

more wisely employed in endeavouring to purify and sweeten those polluted streams. To succeed in multiplying blood was ruinous. The greater the power of their art the more pernicious it was to themselves and to their country. And this is the whole extent of the boasted power of Satan : it is a power to do evil, a power to destroy : but a power destitute both of capacity and of inclination to do good. Whereas that of heaven, though it be an ability to do evil, is an ability to this effect, which it exercises rarely and with reluctance ; whereas the doing of good and the diffusing of Happiness are its habitual object, and its constant employment. Vain man would be independent, and sometimes boasts that he is so ; and yet, what is he ? A creature sustained by bread, and refreshed by water ; he lives by respiring the air which he sucks in ; he depends, every instant of his existence, on the aid of every element. Let the quantity or the qualities of any one of them be ever so little changed, and that moment he becomes miserable. One rainy or drougthy season makes whole nations to languish ; the frost of a night destroys the hope of a year ; and a single blast of wind sends mighty navies to the bottom. There is no need of a miracle to plague those whom God means to punish. All nature is at war with his adversaries : the stars, in their courses, fight against those who fight with God. O may we never be so mad as to provoke that power by which we are continually supported, and from which we cannot flee !

After a chastisement so awful, who could have

imagined that Pharaoh was able still to stand out? But the human heart exhibits a mystery of iniquity, which nothing but multiplied experience could render credible. The next summons has a threatening annexed to it; and the moment of refusal is to be the moment of execution. The plague threatened, being particularly specified beforehand, was likely to excite the greater alarm, and thereby to drive the offender to the means of prevention: but it would appear Pharaoh despised it. What, terrified at a swarm of frogs! vermin loathsome indeed, but despicably harmless. How ignorantly do men estimate the judgments of God, when they consider only the instrument which he employs? Men effect little with large and abundant means; God performs wonders with things mean and contemptible. Is a haughty tyrant to be subdued? There is no need of more than twelve legions of angels; an army of frogs in the hand of God is sufficient for the purpose. Again the magicians are weak enough to assist the plague; at least they affect to lend their aid; and rather than not be thought mighty, will seek themselves a name by doing mischief. Again the river, which ministered so much to their pride, is made the minister of avenging heaven to punish them. As its waters were lately all blood, to poison the fishes which it contained, and to taint the air, so now they are all putrefaction, to give dreadful life to an innumerable race of odious vermin, for humbling the proud. Every creature is and does just that which God would have it to be and to do—it becomes

either a blessing or a curse at his command ! And were we wise enough to assist our weak, or to correct our erroneous vision by the optics of the sanctuary, we should behold, under many a fair and flattering form, much loathsomeness and deformity.

Pharaoh despised this plague while it was only threatened, but feels it to be no slight one, when it falls upon him ; and he is, in this respect, the image of many a thoughtless sinner, who trifle with the judgments denounced in the word of God, till bitter experience teaches them, that every arrow, from the quiver of the Almighty, is both penetrating and poisonous. The proud heart which refused to bend, at length begins to break ; and a slow, lingering, partial, reluctant consent is given to the demand of Heaven ; and permission is granted to the people to go, “ that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.” The concession, slight as it is, procures a respite. Mercy, ever on the wing, flies to succour the miserable.

We have seen Moses and Aaron executing the judgments of avenging heaven, by the agency of a rod. Christ himself is the powerful Word, by which God made and sustains worlds ; the all-potent instrument to save and to destroy. “ With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” Moses acted by a delegated power : Jesus has all power in Himself. “ Moses verily was

“ faithful in all his house, as a servant : but Christ
“ as a Son, over his own house.” The same Moses
was the deliverer of Israel, and the scourge of
Egypt : The same Jesus, who is the Author of
eternal Salvation to them that believe, “ shall be
“ revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in
“ flaming fire : taking vengeance on them that know
“ not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord
“ Jesus Christ.” “ All judgment is committed to
“ the Son.” “ He shall reign, till he hath put all
“ his enemies under his feet.” “ The last enemy that
“ shall be destroyed is death.”

“ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where
“ is thy victory ? Thanks be to God who giveth us
“ the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Amen.

LECTURE XV.

EXODUS X. 7.

And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet, that Egypt is destroyed?

HOW very different an appearance do objects wear, according as they are beautiful and exalted by the favour of Heaven, or as they are blasted and disfigured by the curse of an offended God! Eden, before man's apostasy, Eden, fresh planted by the sovereign hand of the Creator, contained every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, and in the midst of it was the tree of life; but, O sad reverse, the fatal effect of transgression! "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;" and the tree of life is removed to happier regions, or guarded from guilty man's approach by the flaming swords of the Cherubim. The plain of Jordan, well-watered every where, and beautiful as the garden of the Lord, delighted the eyes and allured the heart of Lot, when he separated himself from his uncle Abraham. But O how awfully changed that once delicious spot! The day when Lot went out of it, "Abraham looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and

“ towards all the land of the plain, and beheld, and
“ lo, the smoke of the country went up, as the
“ smoke of a furnace.” What a charming prospect
did Egypt present in the days of her glory? Her
fertile surface, covered with the silver flux of her
stately, overflowing river, except where thousands of
populous cities lifted up their proud heads to the
skies; or, when the river retreated, her golden,
luxuriant harvests waving with the fragrant wind.
How changed the scene, when the Nile ran, not
water, but blood; after the murrain had destroyed
all their cattle; after the lightning and the hail had
blasted every tree, had devoured every herb, and the
“ locusts had consumed what the hail had left!”
What makes earth resemble heaven, and men like
angels? The presence, the blessing, and the image
of God! What once covered the earth with water,
and what shall at length destroy it by fire? What
sinks men to the level of diabolical, damned spirits,
and adds tenfold horror to gloomy hell? The wrath
of the Almighty, and the deprivation of his glorious
similitude. Nature sinks under the description and
the denunciation of the divine displeasure. What
must it be to endure its dreadful effects, without in-
termission, and without end!

Instead of going into a particular detail of the
subsequent plagues wherewith God afflicted Egypt,
we shall suggest a few historical and practical re-
marks upon the subject in general; serving to unfold
the windings and the workings of the human heart,
to illustrate and vindicate the ways of Providence,

to expose the madness of striving against God, and to display the wisdom, the safety, and the happiness, of submitting readily, cheerfully, and universally to the divine authority.

And first, We observe, that as God has many inconceivable methods of doing good to men, so his power of punishing is unlimited, and the treasures of his wrath are far beyond what fear itself, which magnifies every object, can fancy. Of his glorious capacity and disposition to bless mankind, who has not enjoyed the sweetest and frequently repeated experience? Whose life is so short as not to contain a history of benefits, a display of mercy, a profusion of loving-kindness, which astonish while they delight? Whose portion of felicity is so scanty as not to exhibit wonders of goodness infinitely above the desert of angels? What understanding is so brutish, what heart so ungrateful, as not to recur, at the first call, to a multitude of special blessings, pressing upon the memory, urging prior or superior claims of acknowledgment and praise? Need you to be told, ungrateful, forgetful children of men! Need you to be told the value of an uninterrupted and steady course of good health; or of the more sensible benefit of recovery from sickness and pain? Shall I send you back to years that are long past, or recall yesterday to your recollection? Shall I remind you of that common bounty which gives you day by day your daily bread; or of that singular, shall we say miraculous, interposition, which seemed to drop down manna around your tabernacle? Must all

ages, and nations, and regions of the world, be made to pass in review before your eyes ; or will you confine your observation to your own moment of existence, your own hand-breadth of space, your own two or three acquaintances and contemporaries, your own pittance of knowledge ? Shall the glories of nature or the wonders of Providence be unfolded to your view ? Will you contemplate the fatness and fragrancy of the fertile earth, or the vastness and brilliancy of the azure vault of heaven ? Will you confine yourselves to things seen and temporal ; or, borne as on the eagle's wing, contemplate things which are unseen and eternal ? Will you converse with your fellow-mortals on the surface of this mole-hill, or join in the songs and raptures of angels who surround the throne, and of the spirits of the just men made perfect, immortal intelligences, perfectly awake to the full perception of their blessedness ? Choose you to dwell on the transitory comforts of the life that now is, or to anticipate the joys substantial, sincere, and lasting, of that which is to come ? Creation spreads her fair, her ample, her splendid page to the delighted eye. The mysterious Volume sealed, to the careless reader, as with seven seals, to the serious and attentive soul unveils the hidden wisdom of God, and, written with a sun-beam, there stands recorded the gracious purpose of Him who “ worketh all things after the counsel of “ his own will.”

Wouldst thou be satisfied, O man, that the great God has means innumerable, unutterable, incom-

prehensible, of conferring happiness on mankind? Think, O think, how he has loved the world, in the redemption of it by CHRIST JESUS! Think how *many* demonstrations of grace meet in that *one*, “God spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all!” And when you have ruminated, and ruminated on the history of Redeeming Love; when you have recovered from the astonishment and joy of contemplating what God *has done* for you, lose yourself afresh, in the prospect of what the Lord hath *laid up* for the heirs of salvation—in the prospect of that great, exceeding, and “eternal weight of glory,” “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and of which it hath not entered into the heart of man” to form any adequate conception or idea! Fly, O my soul, whithersoever thou wilt; settle wherever thou wilt, infinite goodness still supports thy flight, and settle thou must on the Rock of ages at last.

But ah! my friend, this God, almighty to save, is also mighty to destroy. As his bounty is an inexhausted source of plenty, to bless his friends, so his justice is a capacious quiver, stored with innumerable poisoned arrows to shed the blood, to drink up the spirits of his adversaries. Think in how many parts art thou vulnerable? In every particle of thy frame, in every faculty of thy soul. Every sense opens a passage for the entrance of an avenging God. The understanding, at his command, expands to the dreadful perception of justice that will not bend, of severity that knows not to relax, of vengeance that admits not of pity. Memory, roused by that trum-

pet which awakes the dead, gives new form and substance to the hideous spectres of transgressions long since departed, and which were vainly imagined to be laid in the grave for ever; and the guilty wretch is dragged to the bitter recollection of what he once dwelt on with unhallowed delight, and now would fain bury in eternal oblivion; or which he gladly would, at the price of worlds, redeem from the history of his wretched life. As memory, in order to fulfil the righteous judgment of God, can readily summon up all that is past, in order to awaken remorse and inspired terror; so fear launches forth into the boundless, endless regions of futurity, and rouses despair; and in the very abysses of burning hell, shudders at the thought of a deeper gulf and of a hotter flame. Read, O sinner, the history of the plagues of Egypt, and tremble! Suppose, for a moment, the cup wherewith thou art ready to quench thy burning thirst, instantly turned into blood, to the loathing of thy soul and thy flesh. Suppose thy body struck with an universal leprosy, or the dust under thy feet quickened into abominable vermin; the air around thy head impregnated with swarms of noisome insects; thy sun extinguished for three tedious lingering days, and the thunder of an angry God rolling over thy guilty devoted habitation; and suppose all this to be but the beginning of sorrow, the mere threatening of wrath to come; woe that may be endured, torment that may expire: For ah! from yonder fearful pit

arises the smoke of a fire that shall not be quenched, smoke that shall ascend for ever and ever. I hear groans bursting from the bosom of despair; and the rattling of everlasting, adamantine chains. Behold the wild looks, the agonizing pangs of that poor rich man, when, from the flames of his torment, he beholds Lazarus in Abraham's bosom: when he beholds heaven removed to an inaccessible distance, heaven disjoined by an unpassable gulf. Heaven, the rest of the weary and the reward of the faithful, affords to him a momentary glimpse of its joys, only to embitter remorse, only to pierce the soul with keener pangs, and to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was before. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

After serious reflection upon these things, our second observation would seem ill-founded, and destitute of all probability and truth, did not all history, and daily experience, confirm the woeful certainty of it. It is this:—That by frequent indulgence, and inveterate habits of sin, the heart may at length become quite callous; may be rendered equally insensible to the calls of mercy and the alarms of justice. We are struck with astonishment at the sight of a poor, infatuated wretch, like Pharaoh, repeatedly braving that power which returned to crush and humble him, and slighting that grace which as often relented, and afforded space and means for repentance. Would to God there were room to think the representation more unnatural than it is, and that the character of Pharaoh were a rarity in the

world. But alas! what is the life of most men but an habitual fighting against God? Upon whom falls the weight of our remark? Upon a few thoughtless, hardened wretches only, who have found out the secret of lulling conscience to rest; who, having conquered the sense of fear and of shame, commit iniquity with greediness; who "hide not their sin, like Sodom, but publish it like Gomorrah?" Let us not deceive ourselves, but watch over our own hearts, and "exhort one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." There stands Pharaoh, the daring, the presumptuous sinner, whom goodness could not mollify, nor judgments subdue: And let him who is without sin cast the first stone at him. Who can flatter himself with the thought, that the errors of his life were the mere inadvertencies of haste and inattention? Who can say of himself, "This fault I corrected as soon as I discovered it? Having been once made sensible of the danger and wickedness of that sinful course, I instantly forsook it, and have returned to it no more. Smarting from the effects of my folly, I have never again dared to provoke the lash of my Father's chastening rod. The resolutions which I formed in the day of sickness, and sorrow, and calamity, I have faithfully remembered and diligently kept. Vows made at the Lord's table I have made conscience to perform. The threatenings of God's word I have not disregarded; the long-suffering of my God I have not abused."

Alas ! alas ! the reverse of all this is the truth which condemns every one. Not a single, but repeated acts of intemperance, injustice, impurity, impiety ; not casual and undesigned expressions, but deliberate and indulged habits of falsehood, malevolence, selfishness, and uncharitableness, place *us* as criminals at the bar, by the side of Pharaoh, and forbid us to condemn him, because we also have sinned. What avails it me to say that my offence is not the same with his ? Perhaps I had neither power, nor inclination, nor opportunity for committing that man's transgression. Have I therefore washed my hands in innocence ? Can I therefore plead " not guilty ? " The great question is, Have I kept myself free from *mine own* transgression ? And, spared of God to make the inquiry—let Pharaoh's impenitence, and Pharaoh's doom, awaken us to a sense of our danger, and urge a speedy flight from the wrath that is to come.

Thirdly, This history leads us to remark the great difference between the slow, reluctant, partial submission of fear, and the prompt, cheerful, and unreserved compliance of a grateful and affectionate heart. Pharaoh, like a sullen, sturdy slave, will not move a step till stimulated by a fresh application of the whip ; the moment that the pain of the stripe ceases, he stands still or turns back. The first summons is treated by him with insolence and scorn ; and he resolves that Israel shall not have a single moment's relaxation from their burthens. Brought to himself by a few strokes of the rod of God's

anger, he yields a tardy consent to the intermission of their labours, for a little while, and to their doing sacrifice to their God: but it must be "in the land where they dwelt, even in Egypt." That alternative being rejected, and a new demand made, enforced with a new threatening, and followed by a new plague, he agrees to permit the *male* part of Israel, who were arrived at man's estate, to resort to the place appointed; but he is determined to detain their wives, children, and cattle as hostages for their return. Constrained at length, by dint of judgments, to let the *whole* congregation depart, he endeavours to stipulate that they should not go *very far off*; and not, till broken by the last dreadful plague, can he be brought to resign his usurped authority over the free-born sons of God.

We often find men pretending to make a merit of giving up what it is no longer in their power to retain. After a man has squandered away his means in riot and extravagance, deserves he praise for living sparingly? Another has ruined his constitution by intemperance; is his forced continence an object of admiration? By no means. He has discontinued his debaucheries, through disability, not from inclination and conviction of his error. Old age has debilitated a third; is he therefore virtuous? No, no: his vices have forsaken him, not he his *vices*. When a man serves through fear, he does no more than he needs must; but love is liberal and generous, and stands not questioning, "Yea, hath God said?" but, ever on the watch, ever on the wing,

the moment that the voice of God is heard, it is ready to reply, "Here am I, Lord, send me." This leads me to remark,

Fourthly, The wisdom of giving up, at the command of God, with alacrity, what we must give up at last, whether we will or not. What a pitiful figure does Pharaoh make in the end! baffled in every attempt, driven out of every fortress, dishonoured in the eyes of his own servants, transmitted to latest posterity a monument of pride and impotence. Were not the proud man blind and infatuated, he would yield through self-love; he would submit in order to preserve his own consequence, at least the appearance of it. Unhappily for us, our will stands but too often in opposition to the will of God. When they come to clash, who ought in reason to give way? Who must of necessity submit? Knowest thou not, O man, that in order to destroy thyself, thou needest but to follow thy own headstrong inclinations: knowest thou not, that the gratification, not the disappointment, of illicit desire is ruinous? But whoever made a sacrifice of inclination to duty, and had reason to repent of it? Who knows not that to yield submission is to obtain a triumph? In a contention where there is a probability, or even a possibility, of our prevailing, it may be worth while to risk a combat; but who, except a madman, will seek to encounter a foe by whom he is sure to be defeated? And yet in that mad, that ruinous strife, see how many are engaged! Behold the stars in their courses ranged on the part

of their Creator; behold all nature standing in arms to espouse his cause; and who must be overcome? Against whom is this formidable preparation made? There stands the enemy in all his weakness and folly; a crawling worm on a dunghill, provoking his fate, tampering with eternal ruin, hardening himself against God, and yet thinking to prosper. The influence of no malignant star is necessary to blast him: there is no necessity for an earthquake to swallow him up: no archangel armed with a sword of fire need descend to cut him asunder; his breath is in his own nostrils; he is sinking into his dust; his own ridiculous efforts are wasting and consuming him. Foolish creature and unwise! why wilt thou contend longer? "wherefore shouldest thou be stricken any more?" Constrain not HIM to be thy foe, who has towards thee the disposition of the best of friends, and who is mighty to save, even "to the utmost, them that come unto him."

Fifthly, In the course of these dreadful plagues, we observe, not only the pride of man effectually humbled, but the power of Satan trampled in the dust, under the feet of the Most High. It is highly interesting to observe, by what gradual steps the enemy and the avenger is laid low, till he is at length destroyed. Presumption, at first, induces him, in confidence of a permitted power, to enter the lists and to try his strength with God. Aaron's rod is turned into a serpent. The magicians attempt the same, and succeed. Their rods also become serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their

rods. By and by, the water of the river is turned into blood, and the fishes die. The magicians, by their enchantments, madly assist the plague, and acquire a little transitory reputation by doing mischief. Flushed with this farther success, they go on to imitate the miracles of Moses and Aaron; but, to their confusion, they fail there where it seemed most probable that they should with the greatest ease support their fame. That loathsome vermin, lice, is to be produced miraculously, which slovenliness and filth naturally produce without any effort. At the word of Moses, the dust of the land is transformed into this noisome, nauseous insect. But the whole power of hell cannot effect, at the time, and in the manner, which it would, what time and carelessness alone, in the usual course of things, would certainly have produced; and they feel themselves attacked with a plague which their art could not bring upon others. Finally, after having become the subjects of a miraculous calamity, which might be borne, they are at length attacked with one absolutely intolerable, which drives them from the competition; they give up their silly arts of sorcery, and attempt to rival the true God no more. And thus, when the mystery of godliness shall be finished, an astonished world shall behold the sleight and devices of Satan falling upon his own head, his momentary triumph covering him with more accumulated disgrace, and his infernal malice and diabolical craft made ministering servants to the wisdom and goodness of God. A good

reason, among many others, why we should judge nothing rashly, before the time, till the Lord cometh, who shall bring light out of obscurity, and fully vindicate his ways to men.

Sixthly, We observe, how unlike the latter ends of things are to their beginnings. The world laughs at the idea of two feeble old men, issuing forth from a desert, the patrons of liberty; to force a mighty prince, and a powerful nation, to listen to the dictates of justice and humanity, and to liberate a million of wretched creatures, whose spirits were totally broken by their miseries, and who seemed to have lost even the inclination of vindicating their own rights. Pharaoh despised them; the magicians defied them; Israel distrusted them; they themselves are ready to sink under the difficulty and danger of the enterprise. But conducted of heaven, they attempt, they proceed, they prosper, they overcome. They invade Egypt, two solitary, unsupported individuals! They leave it at the head of six hundred thousand men, fit to bear arms, with a corresponding number of females, besides old men and children, and a mixed multitude of non-descript persons; bidding defiance to the whole force of a wise, and populous, and warlike country. And we see them, in the course of a few years, taking forcible possession of one of the strongest, most impracticable, and best defended countries in the world.

I need but hint to you the counter-part of this. Behold the unconnected son of a carpenter, at the

head of twelve simple illiterate fishermen, attacking the religious establishments of the whole globe, and prevailing.' Behold him, armed with a few plain facts, and a few doctrines as plain, overturning the whole fabric of heathen mythology and worship; ingrafting on the stock of Moses, and of the legal dispensation, a scion from a nobler root, which has swallowed up the parent tree, has filled the earth with its branches, is feeding the nations to this day with its fruit, and is likely to maintain its place, till all the gracious purposes of Heaven are accomplished. "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." "When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." The next Lecture will, if God permit, exhibit the institution and celebration of the passover, with the event which gave occasion to it. May God bless what has been spoken. To Him be glory and honour, for ever and ever.

LECTURE XVI.

EXODUS XII. 1—3.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers: a lamb for an house.

IN the history of all nations there are eras and events of peculiar importance, which extend their influence to future ages and generations, and are fondly commemorated by latest posterity. Hence, every day of the revolving year becomes, in its course, to one people or another, the anniversary of something memorable which befell their forefathers, and is remembered by their sons with triumph or with sorrow. Most of the religious observances which obtained in the world, when traced up to their source, are found to originate in providential dispensations; and history thereby becomes the best interpreter of customs and manners. It is a most amusing employment to observe the operation and progress of the human mind in this respect; and to consider how variously different men, and at different periods, have contrived to transmit to their children the memory of similar achievements, success-

es, or disasters. A great stone set up on end, a heap of stones, a mound of earth, and the like, were in the earlier, ruder, simpler state of the world, the monuments of victory; and to dance around them with songs, on an appointed day, was the rustic commemoration of their rude and simple posterity. The triumphs and the death of heroes came, in process of time, to be remembered with conviviality and mirth; or with plaintive strains and solemn dirges. The hoary bard varied and enlivened the feast, by adapting to his rough voice, or rougher harp, the uncouth rhymes which he himself had composed, in praise of departed gallantry and virtue. As arts were invented and improved, the wise, the brave, and the good were preserved from oblivion, by monuments more elegant, more intelligible, and more lasting. A more correct style of poetry, and a sweeter melody, were cultivated. Sculpture and painting conveyed to children's children an exact representation of the limbs and lineaments of the venerable men who adorned, who instructed, who saved their country. And thus, though dead, they continued to live and act in the animated canvas, in the breathing brass, or in the speaking marble. At length, the pen of the historian took up the cause of merit, and diffused over the whole globe, and handed down to the very end of time, the knowledge of the persons and of the actions which should never die.

We are this evening to bestow our attention upon an institution altogether of divine appointment, intended to record an event of singular importance to

the nation immediately affected by it, and which, according to its intention and in its consequences, has involved a great part of mankind.

Moses and Aaron having, as the instruments in the hand of Providence, chastised Egypt with nine successive and severe plagues, inflicted in the view of procuring Israel's release, are at length dismissed by the unrelenting tyrant, with a threatening of certain death, should they ever again presume to come into his presence. Moses takes him at his word, and bids him a solemn, a long, and everlasting farewell. When men have finally banished from them their advisers and monitors, and when God has ceased to be a reprover to them, their destruction cannot be very distant. Better it is to have the law to alarm, to threaten, and to chastise us, than to have it in anger altogether withdrawn. Better is a conscience that disturbs and vexes, than a conscience laid fast asleep, than a conscience "seared as with a hot iron."

What a solemn preparation is made for the tenth and last awful plague of Egypt! God is about to reckon with Pharaoh and his subjects for the blood of the Israelitish male children, doomed from the womb to death by his cruel edict. His eye pitied not, nor spared the anguish of thousands of wretched mothers bereaved of their children, the instant they were born; and a righteous God pities, spares him not, in the day of visitation.

The circumstances attending this tremendous calamity are strikingly calculated to excite horror.

First, God himself is the immediate author of it. Hitherto he had plagued Egypt by means and instruments; "Stretch out thy hand:" "Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thy hand with thy rod." But now it is, "I will go out into the midst of Egypt." "And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the first born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle." As mercies coming immediately from the hand of our heavenly Father are sweeter and better than those which are communicated through the channel of the creature? so judgments issuing directly from the stores of divine wrath are more terrible and overwhelming. The sword of an invading foe is a dreadful thing, but infinitely more dreadful is the sword of a destroying angel, or the uplifted hand of God himself.

Secondly, the nature and quality of the calamity greatly increase the weight of it. It is a wound there where the heart is most susceptible of pain; an evil which undermines hope; hope, our refuge and our remedy under other evils. The return of another favourable season may repair the wastes, and compensate the scarcity of that which preceded it. A body emaciated or ulcerated all over may recover strength, and be restored to soundness; and there is hope that the light of the sun may return even after a thick darkness of three days. But what kindness of nature, what happy concurrence of circumstances,

can re-animate the breathless clay, can restore an only son, a first-born, stricken with death?

The universality of this destruction is a third horrid aggravation of its woe. It fell with equal severity on all ranks and conditions; on the prince and the peasant, on the master and the slave. From every house the voice of misery bursts forth. No one is so much at leisure from his own distress as to pity, soothe, or relieve that of his wretched neighbour.

Fourthly, the blow was struck at the awful midnight hour, when every object assumes a more sable hue; when fear, aided by darkness, magnifies to a gigantic size, and clothes in a more hideous shape, the real and fantastical, the seen and the unseen disturbers of silence and repose. To be prematurely awakened out of sleep by the dying groans of a friend suddenly smitten, to be presented with the ghastly image of death in a darling object, lately seen and enjoyed in perfect health, to be forced to the acknowledgment of the great and holy Lord God by such an awful demonstration of his presence and power! What terror and astonishment could equal this?

The keen reflection that all this accumulated distress might have been prevented was another cruel ingredient in the embittered cup. How would they now accuse their desperate madness, in provoking a power which had so often and so forcibly warned them of their danger? If Pharaoh were not past feeling, how dreadful must have been the pangs

which he felt, while he reflected that, after attempting to destroy a hapless, helpless race of strangers who lay at his mercy, by the most unheard-of cruelty and oppression, he had now ruined his own country, by an obstinate perseverance in folly and impiety; that he had become the curse and the punishment of a nation of which he was bound by his office to be the father and protector; and that his own hopes were now blasted in their fairest, most flattering object, the heir of his throne and empire, because he regarded not the rights of humanity and mercy, in the treatment of his vassals.

Finally, if their anguish admitted of a still higher aggravation, the distinction, from first to last, made between them and Israel, the blessed exemption which the oppressed Hebrews had enjoyed from all these calamities, especially from this last death, must have been peculiarly mortifying and afflictive. "But against any of the children of Israel, shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast; that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." This partakes of the nature of that misery which the damned endure; who are represented as having occasional, distant, and transitory glimpses of the blessedness of heaven, only for their punishment, only to heighten the pangs of their own torments. Of the approach of their other woes these unhappy persons had been repeatedly warned. But this, it would appear, came upon them suddenly, and in a moment. They had gone to rest in security. The

short respite which they enjoyed from suffering, had stilled their apprehension; "surely," said they, "the bitterness of death is past." But ah! it is only the deceitful calm which precedes the hurricane or earthquake. Let men never dream of repose from the righteous judgment of God, whatever they may have already endured, till they have forsaken their sins, and fled for refuge in the divine mercy.

It is now worth while to consider the notice given to God's own people of this approaching evil, and the means which were appointed and employed to secure them from being involved in the general ruin. The event, so destructive to Egypt, was intended to be the era of their liberty and the means of their deliverance. They had hitherto reckoned the beginning of their year from the month of Tisri, which answers to our September; which, as they supposed, was the time when the creation was begun and completed; but they are now positively enjoined to begin to reckon from the month Abib or Nisan, that is March, in memory of a new creation, whereby their condition was totally changed from servitude of the most abject kind, into freedom the most exalted and perfect, even the glorious liberty of the sons of God. They are distinctly informed of the stroke which Providence was meditating against Egypt, and of the precise time when the blow was to be struck. They are accordingly directed to two things: First, to provide for their own safety; and, Secondly, to hold themselves in perfect readiness to

take advantage of the permission to depart which the panic, occasioned by the death of the first-born, should extort from Pharaoh. For the former of these purposes, every particular family, or the two adjoining, in proportion to their number, the lowest according to the Jewish writers, being not under ten, nor the highest above twenty, were commanded to choose out, and to set apart, every household, a male lamb or kid, of a particular description, on the tenth day of the month, and to kill it on the evening of the fourteenth. The flesh of the victim was commanded to be eaten by every several household apart, roasted with fire. They were all enjoined carefully to keep within their houses. And the blood of the sacrifice was to be taken and sprinkled on the two side posts, and the upper door-post of every house where it was eaten. This sprinkling of the blood was to be the token of God's covenant, and a protection, to the families thus distinguished, from the sword of the avenging angel.

But a positive institution so immediately from Heaven, an institution so full of meaning and instruction, of such celebrity in the history of the world, and connected so closely with an ordinance of still greater notoriety, and of much more extensive influence, an ordinance of much longer duration, and which commemorates an event of infinitely greater importance, surely demands the most minute attention, and the most serious inquiry. We pretend not to comprehend, and therefore undertake not to explain, every particular circumstance of this solemn, divine insti-

tution; but the moral and religious design is, in general, so obvious, that a reader of ordinary capacity has but to run over it with a common degree of seriousness and attention, in order to understand what the spirit of God is saying in it for the edification of mankind.

And first, God was about to distinguish Israel by special marks of his favour. In order to this, they must carefully distinguish themselves by a punctual observance of his command. Is more expected of an Israelite than of an Egyptian? Undoubtedly. The blessings which come down from above, from the Father of lights, are not mere arbitrary and capricious effusions of liberality, falling upon one spot and passing by another, without reason or design. No, they are the wise and gracious recompense of an intelligent, observing, and discriminating Parent, to faithful, affectionate, and obedient children. Israel had been forewarned of the ensuing danger to no purpose, had one iota or tittle relating to the ordinance of the Paschal Lamb been neglected. Calamity is to be avoided, not by foreknowing that it draws nigh, but by running to a place of safety. Salvation by Christ consists, not merely in head-knowledge of his person, doctrine, and work, but in a cordial receiving, and resting upon, him alone for salvation, as he is freely offered to us in the gospel, for "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The careful selection, then, of a proper victim, and the exact application of it,

according to the commandment, have a plain and an instructive meaning.

Secondly, As Israel was to depart in haste, the Spirit of God was pleased to enjoin a memorial of that haste, in the quality of the bread which they were to use, during the celebration of this festival. When liberty, dear liberty is in view, who is so silly as to care whether the taste be gratified or not, for a few days, with a less palatable kind of food? Our most perfect enjoyments in this world, and our highest attainments, have a mixture of bitterness or of insipidity attending them: like the flesh of lambs eaten with bitter herbs, and unfermented bread. The Jews we know were singularly diligent and curious in searching out and removing from their houses every thing leavened, during this sacred season. With superstitious scrupulousness they prepared unleavened bread for themselves and the poor, for months before the solemn day arrived. A few days previous to the feast they cleansed all their vessels and furniture. What could stand the fire, they purified with fire; what could not, they dipped in, or rinsed with, water. Their marble mortars they had hollowed anew. The night preceding the day of unleavened bread, they lighted wax tapers, and prepared for a general search after every remainder of leaven. The master of the family began the ceremony with this solemn address to God, "Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast commanded us to put away all that is leavened out of our houses." All the males of the household;

master, children, domestics, assisted in searching the whole house over, and examined into the most secret corners, lest peradventure some lurking particle of leavened bread, or fermented dough, might have been overlooked, in order to its being destroyed. As if this had not been sufficient, that the family might be purged of at least all intentional violation of the commandment, the father of it concluded the search with this solemn execration: "Let all the leaven that is in my house, and which I have not been able to find out or to remove, be scattered, and become like the smallest dust of the earth." An inspired apostle is our interpreter of this part of the paschal observance; so that we can be at no loss about the meaning of the Spirit in its institution. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven; neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The scrupulous exactness of the Jews, in their literal obedience to the commandment, is a severe and just reproof of many, too many professing Christians, who rush to the celebration of the gospel passover with little preparation or seriousness; and some, alas! deliberately hoarding up in their hearts, and secretly, greedily feeding upon "the old leaven of malice and wickedness."

Thirdly, The victim itself claims our most seri-

our attention. "A male lamb, of the first year,"—"without blemish," to be taken on the tenth day of the month from his dam, kept apart for four days, and then killed!—These are all tender and touching considerations. "A lamb:" The most innocent and gentle of animals; in the idea and the language of all ages and nations another name for gentleness, harmlessness, and simplicity; removed early from its only comfort and protection, its fond mother's side; deprived of liberty, and destined to bleed by the sacrificing knife. Who can think of his plaintive bleatings, during the days of separation, without being melted? What Israelitish heart so insensible as not to yearn at the thought, that his own life, and the comfort of his family, were to be preserved at the expense of the life of that inoffensive little creature, whom he had shut up for the slaughter, and which, in unsuspecting confidence, licked the hand lifted up to shed its blood?

We have not long to search for the spirit and substance of this part of the institution: for all Scripture presses upon our notice. "The LAMB OF GOD who taketh away the sin of the world;"—slain, "in the eternal purpose, from, and before, the foundation of the world; holy, harmless, and undefiled;"—"delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God,"—suffering "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "Who was wounded for our transgressions, who was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and

“ with his stripes we are healed : ” the Lord laying on him “ the iniquity of us all ; ” withdrawn, separated from the bosom of his Father—delivered into the hands of men—pouring out his soul unto death.

It was to be “ a lamb of *the first year*,” eight days old at the least ; a year at the most. Not less than eight days, say the Jews, that there might intervene one sabbath from the birth of the victim ; and that so the sacredness of this holy festival might render it worthy of being offered unto God. More probably, because that till then the animal was considered as too near a state of imperfection or impurity. It was not to exceed one year ; because to that age it retains its lamb-like harmlessness and simplicity. Superstition, which is ever sinking the spirit in the letter, has asserted that a single hour beyond the year vitiated the victim, and rendered it profane.

But the figure, without straining for a resemblance, presents unto us Jesus, “ a Son born, and “ a Saviour given : ” ours from the manger, ours to the tomb. His days cut off in the midst ; at that period of life when men are coming to their prime of vigour, beauty, and usefulness. “ A lamb, without blemish.” Those who love to fritter away the spirit and meaning of divine institutions in literal interpretation, have gone into a particular enumeration of the various kinds of blemishes which disqualified a sacrifice, upon this occasion ; and these they have multiplied to considerably above fifty.

And what folly has taken pains to invent, superstition has been idle and weak enough to follow. The later Rabbins tell us that the lamb was set apart four days before the sacrifice, in order to afford leisure and opportunity to inquire into its soundness and perfection; that if any unobserved spot should appear, there might be time to reject it, and to substitute another in its room. The law itself is plain and simple; and no good Israelite, of common sense, with the sacred charter in his hand, could possibly mistake its meaning; which is simply to signify that the good God is to be served with the choicest and best of every thing. But the law evidently looked farther than to the mere corporal perfection or defects of a silly lamb: and we should but ill understand both the text and the commentary, did we not look through the whole type, to HIM who is "without spot and blemish," who, though born of a sinful mother, "did no sin;" who lived many years in the "midst of a sinful and adulterous generation," without contracting any taint of moral pollution; in whom "the prince of this world, when he came, found nothing;" and whom his agents, Judas and Pontius Pilate, the instruments of his condemnation and death, were constrained to acquit. "I have sinned, and betrayed innocent blood:" said the one. "Take ye him, and crucify him, for I find no fault in him," said the other. "And when the centurion saw what was done, he said, Surely this was the Son of God!"

The very act of selecting the one victim from

among many, must have been an affecting office. Why should this innocent creature bleed and die rather than another? Why should the notice of my eye, or his accidentally presenting himself the first of the flock, or his superior beauty and strength, or the determination of the lot, doom him, in preference, to the slaughter? But one *must* die. Here the choice is fixed; and pity must not spare what Heaven has demanded. Such emotions of compassion must have been frequently excited during the four days of separation. The plaintive bleating, issuing from a tender, aching heart, robbed at once of its natural food, protection, and comfort; feeling the bitterness of death in the deprivation of maternal care and tenderness; the mournfully pleasing employment of supplying the devoted victim with aliment, up to the appointed hour; the cherishing and sustaining with solicitude that life to-day, which the strong hand of necessity must take away to-morrow; all these awaken a thousand undescribable feelings. How the heart is wrung as often as the eye, or the ear, or the hand, is attracted to attend, or to minister to the little trembling prisoner! At length the fatal moment is come: and the afflicting alternative presses, "This innocent, or my own first-born, must suffer. If my heart relent, lo, the flaming sword of the destroying Angel is within my habitation. My resolution is formed. There is no room for deliberation. Die thou, that my son may live."

But the paschal victim could have no presenti-

ment of its approaching fate. **Happy** in its ignorance it could die but **once**. **Christians**, need your eyes be directed to your great Gospel Passover? Behold your Atonement—deliberately chosen of God; fixed upon in the maturity of eternal counsels; under the pressure of the great decree; voluntarily presenting and surrendering himself!—Behold him continually admonished of his approaching sufferings and death; and this by his own divine prescience, by the perpetual insults and violence of wicked men, and by the descent of Moses and Elias to the mount of transfiguration. “The decease which he should accomplish” at length, “at Jerusalem,” was continually assuming a darker and a darker complexion, from being foreseen, foreknown, and more keenly felt as the hour drew nigh. Lo, he “treads the wine-press alone.” The dreadful conflict is begun. What “strong crying with tears,” do I hear? “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” What “great drops of blood distilling from every pore, and falling to the ground?” Ah! the unrelenting executioner has begun to perform his infernal task: And yet, the “bleeding Lamb opens not his mouth.” What sigh is that which pierces my soul? What strange accents burst upon my astonished ear? “My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?” The conflict is at an end. He bows his head, “It is finished.” The victim has “poured out his soul unto death.” He has given up the ghost. “These things the angels desire to look into.”

“ O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom
“ and love of God ! How unsearchable are his judg-
“ ments, and his ways past finding out ! ” Who can
“ comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and
“ depth, and height ! ” Who “ can know the love
“ of Christ, which passeth knowledge ! ”

LECTURE XVII.

EXODUS XII. 26, 27.

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

WITH

PSALM XCI. 5—8.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked.

THE great JEHOVAH, in all the works of his hands, and in all the ways of his providence, is ever preparing still grander displays of his divine perfection than those which have been already submitted to our view. This visible creation, fair, and vast, and magnificent as it is, being composed of perishing materials, and destined, in the eternal plan, to a temporary duration, is passing away, to give place to "new heavens, and a new earth,

“wherein dwelleth righteousness.” He who made all things at first saith, “Behold I make all things new.” The whole Jewish œconomy, “The adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises:” The patriarchs and the prophets, with all they said, acted, and wrote, were but the “preparation of the gospel of peace;” and all issue in Christ the Lord, “in whom all the promises are yea, and amen, to the glory of God the Father.” And the kingdom of *grace*, under the great Redeemer, is only leading to the kingdom of *glory*.

It is both pleasant and useful to observe the nature, the occasion, and the design of sacred institutions. A closer inspection generally discovers much more than is apparent at first sight. The ordinance of the Passover owes its institution to an event of considerable importance in the history of mankind; and its abrogation, to a still greater. Its celebration commemorates the destruction of all the first-born in Egypt, and the redemption of Israel. Its abolition marks that most memorable era, the death of God’s own eternal Son, and the redemption of a lost world by the shedding of his precious blood. It is not therefore to be wondered at if, in an ordinance which was intended to expire in the sacrifice of the great “Lamb of Atonement,” slain “from the foundation of the world,” its divine Author should have thought proper to enjoin many particulars which, figuratively and symbolically,

"pointed out good things to come," as well as literally expressed good things present.

Several of these significant circumstances we took occasion to point out to you in the last Lecture. The commencement of the year was changed. The memory of nature's birth was sunk, as it were, in the memory of the Church's deliverance; and a joyful expectation was excited of the gradual approach of "the fulness of time," of the day, the New-year's day, of the world's redemption. In that sacred festival was seen God drawing nigh to his Israel, in loving-kindness, tender mercy, and faithfulness; and Israel drawing nigh to their God, in gratitude, love, and obedience. The feast was prepared by the removal of all leaven, the emblem of "malice and wickedness:" and was eaten with unleavened bread, the emblem of "sincerity and truth." The victim was appointed to be a lamb "of the first year, without blemish," chosen from among the flock, set apart and killed, to preserve the life of him who poured out and sprinkled its blood; the figure of Him who was to come, "the Lamb of God who beareth the sin of the world," holy, harmless, gentle, patient; "delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God:" "suffering, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We are now to continue the subject.

All Israel was engaged in the same service, at the same instant of time, and for the self-same reason.

All had descended from the same common stock, all were included within the bond of the same covenant, all were involved in the same general distress, all were destined of Heaven to a participation in the same salvation. They appear, in the paschal solemnity, a beautiful and an instructive representation of the great, united, harmonious family of God: who are "one body, one spirit, and are called "in one hope of their calling:" "Who have one "Lord, one faith, one baptism:—One God and "Father of all, who is above all, through all, and "in all." And they are all coming, "in the unity "of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of "God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the "stature of the fulness of Christ."

As the church in general had one and the same sacrifice, a lamb of the description which has been mentioned; so every particular family or neighbourhood, according to their number, had their own particular sacrifice, and in that their particular protection and repast. The charity which comprehended the whole Israel of God was thus invigorated and enlivened, by being collected and concentrated; and the sacred fire of love, which was in danger of being extinguished by being dispersed too extensively, being thus confined within a narrower circle, lighting on fewer and nearer objects, and aided by reciprocal sympathy and ardour, was blown up into a purer flame. A happy prefiguration of the blessed influence of the gospel, and of its sacred institutions, to rectify, to rivet, and to improve the

charities of private life ; to shed peace and joy upon every condition and relation ; gradually to expand the heart, through the progressive, continually enlarging circles of natural affection, friendship, love of country, love of mankind, love to ALL the creation of God.

What must it have been to an Israelitish parent, standing with his children around him to eat the Lord's Passover to reflect, that while the arrows of the Almighty were falling thick upon the tents of Ham, *his* tabernacle was secured from the stroke : that while all the first-born in Egypt were bleeding by the hand of the destroying angel, of *him*, a holy and righteous God demanded no victim but one from the flock ; who spared a darling son, and accepted the blood of a lamb ! What must have been the emotions of the Israelitish first-born themselves, at that awful hour, to reflect on the state of their unhappy neighbours of the same description with themselves, and on their own condition, had justice untempered with mercy struck the blow ! Such as this, but far superior, as the deliverance is greater, must be the joy of a truly Christian family, which has hope in God through Christ Jesus the Lord, in reflecting on that grace which has made a difference between them and their sinful neighbours ; which has seasonably warned them " to flee from the wrath " that is to come ; " which has " delivered their " souls from death, their eyes from tears, their feet " from falling." What must be the inexpressible satisfaction of every believer in Christ Jesus, in the

confidence of being sprinkled with the blood of atonement, of “being at peace with God, through “our Lord Jesus Christ,” of having “passed from “death unto life?” What a happy community is the redeemed of the Lord! Wherever scattered on the face of the whole earth, they are nevertheless gathered together in their glorious Head: separated by oceans and mountains, but united in interest and affection; hated, despised, persecuted of the world, yet cherished, esteemed, protected of the Almighty!

The sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation were *many*, because they were imperfect. The sacrifice of the Gospel is *ONE*; because once offered, it “for “ever perfects them that are sanctified by it.” The ancient institution prescribed a whole lamb for every several family; the Gospel exhibits a whole and complete Saviour for every several elect sinner; and that Saviour at once a teacher, an atonement, a ruler; “Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, “and redemption.”

The *application* of the blood of the destined victim, in this institution, is a most remarkable circumstance. “They shall take of the blood, and “strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper “door-posts of the houses wherein they shall eat “it.” It must not be spilt upon the ground as a worthless thing; nor sprinkled in the entering in of the door, to be trampled upon, as an unholy thing; but above, and on either side; to be a covering to

the head, and a bulwark around. "When I see
" the blood I will pass over you." Could the all-dis-
cerning eye of God stand in need of such a token,
in order to judge between an Israelite and an Egyp-
tian? No. But the distinctions of God's love avail
not them who wilfully and wickedly neglect the
distinctions of faith and obedience. The blood in the
basin is the same with the blood on the door-post;
but it is no protection, till it be believingly applied.
The virtue is dormant till sprinkling call it forth.
Surely this part of the ceremony speaks, to the Chris-
tian world, for itself. Why is mention still made of
blood, blood? "the shedding of blood," "the sprink-
" ling of blood," "redemption through blood;" and
the like? It denotes the life, which consists in the
blood of the animal, and it instructs us in this mo-
mentous doctrine, That life being forfeited by sin, the
blood must be shed; that is, the life must be yielded
up, before atonement to justice can be made: that
the substitution and acceptance of one life in the
room of another must depend upon the will and ap-
pointment of the offended lawgiver: That the blood
of slain beasts, having no value nor virtue of its
own to take away sin, must derive all its efficacy
from the appointment of heaven, and from its rela-
tion to a victim of a higher order: and that the
blood, or life, of this ONE victim, yielded up to
divine justice, is, through its intrinsic worth, and
the decree of God, of virtue sufficient to take away
the sins of the whole world:

But as in the original institution, the blood of the

lamb slain was no protection to the house, till it was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop, on the parts of the building, and in the manner directed; so the sovereign balm, appointed of the Most High for the cure of the deadly plague of sin, the price of pardon to the guilty, the life of the dead, becomes effectual to the relief of the guilty, perishing sinner, by a particular application of it, to his own "wounds, bruises, "putrefying sores." Faith, cycling the commandment, the power of God and the grace of Christ, is like the bunch of hyssop in the hand of the paschal worshipper, sprinkling the blood of atonement upon "the upper door-post, and the two side-posts," the understanding, the heart, the life, the ruling and the governed powers of our nature, that the whole may be accepted through the Beloved.

I conclude this part of my subject, with quoting a passage from the Targum of Jonathan, respecting the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb, as it was performed by the children of Israel in Egypt, which has struck myself as uncommonly beautiful and sublime.

"When the glory of the Lord was revealed in Egypt, in the night of the passover, and when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians; he rode upon lightning. He surveyed the inmost recesses of our habitations; he stopped behind the walls of our houses; his eyes observed the posts of our doors: they pierced through the casements. He perceived the blood of circumcision, and the blood

“ of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon us. He viewed
“ his people from the heights of heaven, and saw
“ them eating the passover, roasted with fire : he saw,
“ and had compassion upon us ; he spared, and suf-
“ fered not the destroying angel to hurt us.”

The inferior circumstances, respecting the sacrifice, are these. The flesh of the victim was to be eaten in the night season, not in a crude state, nor boiled in water, but roasted with fire ; no bone of it was to be broken ; no remnant of it left until the morning ; or else the remains were to be consumed by fire. I am unwilling entirely to pass over these circumstances, as if they were of no especial meaning or importance ; for I am thoroughly convinced that every iota and tittle, relating to this ordinance, has a specific meaning and design. But I frankly acknowledge I cannot discern that design in every particular, and am far from being satisfied with the fanciful and unsupported illustrations of some commentators upon the passage. Should I myself seem, to any, to have given too much into imagination and conjecture, in my ideas of it, or in what is farther to be offered,—the nature of the subject, the silence of Scripture, the consciousness of honestly aiming at your rational entertainment and religious instruction ; and the humble hope that these conjectures are, and shall be conformed to the analogy of faith, and if erroneous, innocently so ; these will, I am persuaded, secure me a patient hearing and a candid interpretation.

The time of the feast was the night season ; the

very juncture when the awful scene was acting, which marred the glory and blasted the strength of Egypt. Inconsiderate man must have his attention roused and fixed by strong and striking circumstances. The moment of execution, the hour of battle, and the like, are awfully interesting to a serious, humane, and public-spirited person. Every son of Israel knew, that at the very moment he was eating his unleavened cake with gladness, and the flesh of lambs with a merry heart, “thousands were falling at his side; and ten thousand at his right hand.” What an alarming demonstration of divine justice! What an encouraging display of goodness and mercy! Were the eye open to see God as he is, were the powers of an invisible world habitually felt, every creature, every season, every event would possess a quickening, an active, a constraining influence over us. But blind, stupid, sluggish as we are, the midnight bell must toll to rouse us to reflection:—Death must assume the complexion of sable night, and add artificial to natural horror, in order to force a way into our stony hearts. And God, who knows what is in man, vouchsafes to instruct his thoughtlessness and folly, by acting through the medium of powerful and awakening circumstances, upon our imagination and senses. Hence possibly the injunction to eat the passover by night.

It was to be “roasted with fire,” not eaten raw, nor sodden with water. To eat flesh in a crude state is unnatural and unwholesome. And we never find the religious institutions of the living and true

God doing violence to innocent natural propensities and aversions, or encroaching on the health and life of his worshippers : for He saith, “ I will have mercy “ and not sacrifice.” Why the one method of preparing it was commanded of God, in preference to the other, we pretend not satisfactorily to account for. Was it to secure an uniformity of practice, in the minutest circumstances relating to his worship? Was it to form his Church and people to implicit obedience to his will, in points which they comprehend not, as in those which they well understand; and that in all cases whatever, whether he be pleased to render, or to withhold a reason? Was it intended as a symbolical representation of their late condition; tried, and prepared, and refined, in the fire of Egyptian oppression; purged but not consumed by it? Was it a figurative view of the judgment of God then executing:—Egypt scorched with the flame; Israel enlightened, seasoned, purified by it? Did it look forward unto, and signify some particular circumstances in the person, the doctrine, or sufferings of the great evangelical sacrifice? O Lord, Thou knowest. “ Secret things belong to thee, but “ things which are revealed belong unto us, and to “ our children.” We thank thee for what thou hast condescended to reveal to us; and would not presume to “ be wise above what is written.” “ Not a bone ” of the paschal lamb was to “ be broken.” This, as well as some of the foregoing circumstances, is by sundry commentators supposed to be intended as a contradiction to various pagan superstitions; and par-

ticularly to the frantic behaviour of the votaries of Bacchus, who, in the fumes of intoxication, or of religious frenzy, committed a thousand abominations and extravagances; they fell into violent agitations, the pretended inspiration of their god; they devoured the yet palpitating flesh of the victims which they had just killed, and broke all their bones to pieces. But the idolatrous rites of the heathen nations were so various, and so contradictory one to another, that we can hardly imagine the great Jehovah would condescend to express any concern, whether the rites of his worship were, in every instance, either conformed or opposed to the usage of idolatry. A very famous critic [Bochart] assigns a very silly reason for this branch of the commandment. He alleges it was another indication of the extreme haste with which the passover was to be eaten. "Men in a hurry," says he, "do not stand to pick bones; much less do they take leisure to break them, for the sake of the juice or marrow:" as if it required more time to sever the joints, and break the bones by violence, than to dissect and disunite the parts without a fracture. The simple meaning of the precept seems to be, that what was once offered to God should not be unnecessarily disfigured and mangled. The blood must be shed; for that was the seal of God's Covenant; the flesh might be eaten, for it was given for the sustenance of man's life; but the bones, forming no part either of food or sacrifice, were to be left in the state in which they were found, till consumed by fire, with the remain-

der of the flesh, if any remained, the next morning. And is it not extremely probable, that God might intend, by certain arbitrary tokens, to describe the Messiah; and that the prohibition to break the bones of the paschal lamb was designed to be a type of a remarkable circumstance attending the crucifixion of our Saviour, which Providence watched over with special attention, and brought about by a miracle? “But when the soldiers came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.” And it is clear from what follows, that the Evangelist considered the precept of the law as a prophecy of Christ; “For these things were done,” says he, “that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.” In many cases it happens, that the prediction was either not attended to, or had not been understood, till the event has explained it.

Nothing of it was to be “left until the morning.” This circumstance was not peculiar to the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, but common to almost every other kind of oblation. This will appear, if we consult the general laws respecting sacrifice. Thus the prescription runs: “And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace-offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any of it until the morning.” And again, “When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam, and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

“ And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it
“ and her young both in one day. And when ye
“ will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the
“ Lord, offer it at your own will. On the same day
“ it shall be eaten up; ye shall leave none of it until
“ the morrow: I am the Lord.” The solemn *affix*,
“ I am the Lord,” seems to insinuate, that the reason of the commandment was to be sought in the majesty and authority of the lawgiver. And, independent of authority, decency seems to require that what has once been devoted to a hallowed use should never afterwards appear in a mangled, impure, or putrid state. Perhaps superstition was, by this precept, obliquely, or intentionally, repressed and repressed; superstition, which loves to feed upon scraps, and to hoard up relics as if they were sacred things; superstition, which gives to the fragments of the sacrifice the veneration due only to the sacrifice itself, and to the great Author of it.

We must notice the remaining particulars of this service, in the manner in which it was originally performed, “ in haste,” “ standing,” “ with loins
“ girded,” “ with staff in hand,” ready to depart. The lamb was to be eaten with “ bitter herbs,” a representation, perhaps, of the mixed nature of every sublunary enjoyment, and of the wholesome uses of unpalatable adversity. The “ standing” posture, and the implements of travelling, speak a plain and distinct language: “ Arise ye, and depart, for this is not
“ your rest.” “ Here ye have no abiding city, but
“ look for one to come.” “ Now we desire a better

“country, that is, an heavenly.” “Arise, let us go hence.” A provision was graciously made for such as might be ceremonially unclean, at the future seasons of celebration; and the door of mercy and communion was open to strangers. Blessed prefiguration of the remedy provided for the chief of sinners; of the refuge opened for the reception of “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel;” of the liberal, condescending, comprehensive spirit of the gospel! Christians, ye “are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” “Those who *were* afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

Men and brethren, the time is at hand when a more fearful midnight cry shall be heard, than even that which smitten groaning Egypt raised in the hour of vengeance. “The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night.” “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” Behold a careless, slumbering world, a world lying in wickedness, is threatened with a death infinitely more dreadful than that which destroyed the first-born with “the second death,” a living death of everlasting banishment “from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” From that last plague there is no security but one; that security, of which the “blood of sprinkling” under the law was but a type. “Run to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.” “Flee, flee for refuge; lay hold of the

“ hope that is set before you.” “ Behold, now is
“ the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of sal-
“ vation.” “ If God be for us ; who can be against
“ us ? ” “ He that spared not his own Son, but de-
“ livered him up for us all, how shall he not with
“ him also freely give us all things ? Who shall
“ lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is
“ God that justifieth : Who is he that condem-
“ neth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is
“ risen again, who is even at the right hand of God,
“ who also maketh intercession for us.”

How many things in the Scriptures ; in Moses,
in the Prophets ; in the Law, in the Gospel ; are
dark and hard to be understood ? But the hour
cometh when the veil shall be removed from our
eyes ; when the Truth as it is in Jesus shall stand
confessed, without a mystery ; and shall be seen and
read of all men. “ What ” he doth, “ ye know not
“ now, but ye shall know hereafter.” We know in
“ part, and we prophesy in part. But when that
“ which is perfect is come, then that which is in
“ part shall be done away.” “ For now we see
“ through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face ;
“ now I know in part ; but then shall I know, even
“ as also I am known.”

LECTURE XVIII.

EXODUS XIII. 17—22.

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him; for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you. And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

ALL that weak, ignorant, erring man can know, is a few of the smaller objects which are immediately around him; and of these, but a few of the more obvious qualities which they possess, and the relations in which they stand to one another. Remove them but a little, as to space or time, and they gradually disappear, till they are at length involved in total darkness. The distance of a few leagues terminates our vision; the lapse of a few years erases all trace

from our memory. The cloud of night conceals or changes the appearance of things the nearest to us, and the most perfectly known. Here, we are dazzled and confounded by an excess of light; there, we are checked and repulsed by dimness and obscurity. The sun forbids us to behold his face by reason of his splendour; the earth and the ocean present to us but their surface; and the heavens oppose to the eager eye a vault of crystal, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." We feel ourselves hedged in, fettered, confined on every side. And our condition, in this respect, is that of every created, limited being. Open prospect after prospect; expand system upon system; add faculty to faculty; yet the prospect is bounded at length. Suns and worlds are capable of being numbered, and there is a height and depth still beyond, which the understanding of an angel cannot fathom.

There is only one Being whose duration is immeasurable—whose space is unconfined—whose power is uncontrolled,—whose understanding is infinite. With Jehovah, a thousand years are as "one day; and one day as a thousand years." He alone can "declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." He is "above all, and through all, and in all!" An impenetrable veil hides futurity from every created eye; but the Spirit of prophecy is pleased sometimes to remove it. Abraham saw the Redeemer's day afar off, and rejoiced.

He saw, in prophetic vision, the servitude, the affliction, and the deliverance of his posterity, at the distance of four hundred years. To mortal man, whose longest span of existence is diminished to much under a century, four hundred years have something like the appearance of an eternity; but before God, time and space are contracted to a point, to a moment. With him, that which is to be done is already done. Men shape events according to their fancy, their fears, their wishes, or their hopes. But “the counsel of the Lord, it shall stand, and he fulfilleth all his pleasure.”

What was the *word* of the Lord to Abraham? “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterwards shall they come out with great substance.” What was the *doing* of the Lord, in conformity to that word? “And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle.” “And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses: and they borrowed of the Egyptians, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required: and

“ they spoiled the Egyptians.” Israel came into Egypt, few in number, weak, and indigent; but they go out from the land of their oppression greatly increased, mighty, and formidable; laden with the spoils of their cruel oppressors, the well-earned reward of the labours of many years, and of much sorrow.

It is repeatedly remarked, that the prediction relating to the deliverance of God's people was fulfilled to a single day. Of this we have a confirmation in the preceding chapter, and the forty-first verse; “ And it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the *self-same day*, “ it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD “ went out of the land of Egypt.” Again, at the 51st verse; “ And it came to pass, the *self-same day*, that the LORD did bring the children of “ Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.” And yet, on comparing numbers, in the prediction, and the history of its accomplishment, we find a difference of thirty years. The Seventy Interpreters were aware of this difficulty, and have obviated it by thus paraphrasing the passage in Exodus, “ The “ sojourning of the Children of Israel, in the land “ *Canaan*, and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.” To justify which computation, we need but to observe, that Moses, in the four hundred and thirty years, includes all the time that Abraham had passed in Canaan, previous to the birth of Isaac. And a learned prelate of our own country, Archbishop Usher, in his valuable

chronology, has proved this calculation to be just. For Abraham was exactly twenty-five years in Canaan before Isaac was born. [A] From the birth of Isaac to the exodus from Egypt, was four hundred and five, which completes the four hundred and thirtieth year, mentioned in this passage, and by Paul, in the third of the Galatians, 17th verse. Thus perfect are all the ways and works of God; thus absolute his power over all persons and all events! No skill, no ardour, no violent efforts on the part of Israel, could accelerate their enlargement. Nor could the combined strength of Egypt, of mankind, of created Nature, retard it one single hour!

In order to preserve, to all generations, the memory of a period so singular and so important in their history, the ordinance of the passover was to be honoured with an annual celebration; and, as positive and arbitrary institutions derive all their value and use from a right understanding of their meaning, and the design of their author, express words are put into the mouths of parents and heads of families, for the instruction of generations to come, in the nature and reason of this solemn service. “And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, *This is done*, because of that which the Lord did unto me, when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee, upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord’s law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord

“brought thee out of Egypt.” “And it shall be
“when thy son asketh thee, in time to come, say-
“ing, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him,
“By strength of hand, the Lord brought us out
“from Egypt, from the house of bondage. And it
“came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us
“go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the
“land of Egypt, both the first-born of man, and
“the first-born of beasts: therefore I sacrifice to
“the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being
“males; but all the first-born of my children I re-
“deem.” Hence it appears that, besides this great
annual sacrifice, a law was enacted at this time,
though it was not to be enforced until they should
be put in possession of the promised land, that in
grateful remembrance of God’s passing over their
first-born, when he destroyed those of Egypt, the
first-born of the human species, and also of the
brute creation, through every age, should be dedi-
cated and set apart as a sacred property. The great
Legislator was pleased afterwards, by a particular
injunction, to appropriate to himself one whole tribe
out of the twelve, in room of the first-born out of
every tribe, to minister unto him in holy things;
and in this ordinance the Church of God, at that
early period, both exhibited and enjoyed an emble-
matical representation of the evangelical priest-
hood; not vested in, and exclusively belonging to
a particular description of men, but the common
character and dignity of all Christians; a “genera-

“tion chosen of God, in Christ, a royal priesthood,
“an holy nation, a peculiar people—that they
“should show forth the praises of Him, who hath
“called them out of darkness into his marvellous
“light.” And they are introduced before the
throne, with this song of praise in their mouths,
“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our
“sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings
“and priests unto God and his father; to him be
“glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Is it not worth while to compare, seeing the Spirit of God has thought it meet to transmit to us the very numbers, the entire state of Israel, as it were, at the time of its descent into Egypt, and at its departure thence? The whole number which accompanied Jacob from Canaan, when driven thence by the famine, himself included, was sixty-six: which, added to the family of Joseph already in Egypt, consisting of himself, of Asenath the daughter of the priest of On, adopted by marriage into the family of Abraham, and of their two sons, the amount is seventy. When they left that country, in a period of little more than two hundred years, they are increased to the amazing sum of six hundred thousand men of military age, without reckoning females, children of both sexes, under twenty, and old men of sixty and upward: for that was the age of superannuation among this people. Taking therefore the calculation so low, as four of all the other descriptions, for one of the military age, that is males from twenty to sixty, the whole number

of the descendants of Abraham that left Egypt must have been at least three millions. So that by dividing the whole time of their sojourning there, into periods of twenty years each, it appears that their number must have been multiplied nearly three times every twenty years. Now, if we consider that the most rapid state of population, in the ordinary course of nature, and in circumstances the most favourable to it, is a *doubling* the number of inhabitants every twenty years; and that, only in the earlier ages of a people or colony—What must we think of this amazing increase, in circumstances the most unfavourable: in a people cooped up in a narrow district, and that district not their own, but the property of a nation much more powerful than themselves; a people among whom marriage was grievously discouraged by the want of liberty, by hard and oppressive labour, by subjection to the despotism of a foreign prince, by penal edicts, which doomed all their male children to death, and by which, doubtless, multitudes perished, together with their natural increase? The multiplication of Israel, in a proportion so great, in a progress so rapid, in a situation so unfriendly; will, in reality, be found a miracle, though less striking to a superficial observation, being gradually and imperceptibly performed, upon closer attention, a prodigy equal or superior to any that were wrought, in immediately effecting their enfranchisement. And this leads us to the grateful acknowledgment of God's

wise and gracious Providence in its ordinary operations and effects. What is daily preservation, but Creation—one omnifick “LET THERE BE,”—daily, every instant repeated? What is the progress of vegetation, of life, and reason, but the continual interposition of the great Source of all being, life, and intelligence? What is dissolution and death, but the supporting, vivifying power of God withdrawn from the body which it just now inhabited?

This vast host was accompanied with what Moses calls a mixed multitude. This is supposed to have been made up of the produce of marriages between Israelites and Egyptians; of Egyptians, who, from the miracles which they had seen wrought in favour of Israel, had been determined to follow the fortunes of that people; and of neighbours who, in the ordinary intercourse of mankind, might be brought into contact with them, and who, through fear, interest, or curiosity, might be induced to follow their camp.

Man, with his usual ignorance and haste, would have been for conducting this mighty army directly to Canaan. And no doubt the same almighty arm which had thus asserted them into liberty, could have led them straight forward to conquest. But in studying the history of the divine conduct, as ordering and governing the affairs of men, we find it is composed partly of the interpositions of Heaven, and partly of the exertions of men. It is not *all* miracle; that were to encourage universal indolence and stupidity in rational beings formed after the

image of God, and to reduce men to mere passive clods of earth; nor is it all, on the other hand, the effect of human skill, industry, and diligence; for that were to resign the government of the world to the frail and the foolish; that were to weaken the power of religion, which is the life, the joy, the guide, the support of the universe. But we discover divine interposition to a certain degree, so as to inspire a reasonable confidence in, and dependence upon God; and we discern the exertions of men crowned with success, through the blessing of Heaven upon them, and this enforcing the necessity of bringing out, and exercising the powers and faculties of our intellectual nature. Israel is delivered from Egypt at once; but is introduced into Canaan by degrees. The former, an act of sovereign power, unmixed with, independent upon human efforts; the latter, the less perceptible operation of Omnipotence, blending itself with, subduing, directing, and promoting the designs and endeavours of reasonable beings, who had a great object in view, and a clear rule by which to walk. Thus, in a case of universal importance, the justification and adoption of the sinner are acts of free, sovereign grace, whereby sin is forgiven, and the rights and privileges of sons conferred; whereas sanctification is the gradual work of the Spirit, supporting us by the way, overcoming our enemies by little and little, and making us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

A great multitude of people is always an object of

serious attention, and of deep anxiety. Many mouths were to be fed, many humours to be studied, many talents to be employed. Some were to be gained by love, others to be governed by fear; the impetuosity of one was to be repressed, the timidity and diffidence of another to be countenanced and encouraged; care was to be exercised about those who were either unable or unwilling to exercise any about themselves. What a charge, then, was that of Moses and Aaron! bearing on their shoulders the burden of such an assembly; a vast multitude agitated with the ordinary passions of human nature; unarmed, unaccustomed to discipline, untractable; one moment elated with extravagant hopes, the next depressed with unreasonable fears. The wisdom of a Moses had been unequal to the task, unsupported by the Wisdom which sees all things at one view, and the power which "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

There is a happy disposition, under all the evils to which our nature and condition are subject, to find out, and to apply their own remedy. Necessity always sets invention to work. Invention puts the machine in motion; and once in motion, every wheel keeps its place, exerts its power, performs its office. But here the mighty machine, prepared in all its parts according to the plan of infinite wisdom, put together and regulated by the hand of almighty power, and conducted by unchangeable truth and faithfulness, could not vary its motion, could not deviate from its design: and the passage

of, perhaps, four millions of people, with their immense possessions of flock, and herds, and other property, from Egypt to Canaan, will appear one of those singular phenomena in history which no principles of human conduct, no natural and ordinary concurrence of events, are able to explain; and which must finally be resolved into a wisdom and power preternatural and divine. Accordingly, we find Providence taking immediately the charge of them; but not in the usual way, not by forming a regular discipline, and raising up commanders and magistrates of unusual address and ability, but declaring by sensible tokens, which were seen, read, and understood of all, "I am the leader and *com-mander* of my people."

But before we proceed to the consideration of this wonderful symbol of the divine presence, we must attend our author, and take notice of a tender and touching circumstance in the departure from Egypt, namely, the removing of the bones of Joseph. That truly great man had been the saviour of his father's house, when he was alive, and was now the hope of Israel after he was dead. In all their afflictions his precious dust had been to them the pledge of deliverance; and now when that deliverance is come, they bear it with them to the land promised to their fore-fathers for burial. Thus respectable and useful, in life and in death, are the wise and the good; thus anxious ought we to be to promote the best interests of mankind, not only while we are yet with them, but to leave something behind us that

may benefit and instruct, after we are seen and heard no more. Christians, we carry with us as our hope in this wilderness, not the bones of a departed deliverer, but the memory of a risen Saviour. The sacred pledge of our final redemption is deposited not in a coffin, but in this precious record—but in the history of facts well known and firmly believed by you—but in many great and precious promises given unto you. “For if we believe that Jesus “died, and rose again; even so them also which “sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” The ashes of the patriarch Joseph could not rest in the tomb, till Israel came to the possession of their promised inheritance; so the Spirit and Providence of the great Redeemer are in perpetual motion and exercise, till he shall have gathered into one all his redeemed unto himself; till the youngest of his sons, the meanest of his daughters, being glorified, shall take possession of their purchased inheritance, “the kingdom prepared for them, from the foundation of the world.”

Thus, then, Israel takes his departure; thus joyfully, thus triumphantly, thus increased; and “not “one sickly or feeble among them;”—a wonder not inferior to any of the rest. But all “is of the “Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and “excellent in working.”

The plain of **Rameses** was the first great rendezvous of the Lord's host. They had built, as part of their task-work, a city of that name, at the command of Pharaoh. But it was also the name of a

region of Egypt, elsewhere called Goshen ; the same which Joseph chose for the reception of his aged parent ; because being situated nearest to Canaan, it diminished the length and fatigue of his journey ; and being a grassy country, suited his family's employment, that of shepherds. The nearness to Canaan might, accordingly, be now again considered as a favourable circumstance to the return of Israel thitherward. If we may credit Philo, the two countries were not above three days' journey distant the one from the other. And certain it is, that the Patriarchs, encumbered with a convoy laden with corn, easily performed a journey to a more distant part of Egypt, and back again, in the course of not many weeks at most. Moses might therefore have, without much difficulty, conducted the people of his charge to the place of their destination, in a very small space of time. But was the distance of place the only difficulty which they had to encounter ? How could men inured to slavery, men just escaped from the rod of a tyrannical oppressor, have the courage to meet the prowess and discipline of the warlike nations of Canaan ; unprovided with arms for the field, and with military engines for the attack of fortified towns, had they been bold enough to attempt to take possession by force. Some interpreters, indeed, render the word *harnessed* in the eighteenth verse of the thirteenth chapter, *armed*. But the term, in the original, is so equivocal, and the learned attempts to determine

Most Mighty thus declared, in language more emphatical than can be conveyed by word—"Lo, I am for you!—Who is he that can, that dare to be against you?"

The appearances of God are suited to the circumstances of his people. Cloud by night would have been to increase the horror, and to multiply the unwholesome damps of that season. Fire by day would have been adding fuel to a flame already intensely hot, in a burning climate and parched soil. But tempered, adapted, distributed according to Wisdom not capable of error, the peculiar inconvenience of each season is relieved; and the ills of nature are remedied by the dispensations of grace. The cloudy-fiery pillar is a manifestation of Deity, suited to a wilderness state. In heaven, a God of Love is light, without "any darkness at all." In hell, a God of implacable Wrath is perpetual darkness without one ray of light. On earth, a God of Justice and Mercy is darkness and light, in successive order and perfect harmony. In heaven, He is a flame that irradiates, cheers, and quickens; in hell, a fire still consuming, never to be extinguished; on earth, fire in a cloud; Mercy flowing in a spacious channel, Judgment restrained. Men can only discover that of God which he is pleased to reveal to them. Whether he is pleased to turn his dark or bright side to us, we are stationed equally at a distance from him. To be sensible of our own darkness is to be partakers of his marvellous light.

All that the brightest noon of human reason can discover is, that it is ignorance and folly, when placed in comparison with the wisdom of God.

Might not this wonderful pillar prefigure to the ancient Church the Person and office of the Redeemer of the world? Behold the divine Essence wrapped up *in*, and closely united *to*, a veil of flesh and blood. Behold Deity raising our Nature to incorruptibility and glory, “in CHRIST, the first-fruits; and afterwards, in all that are Christ’s, at his coming.” Do we not perceive in it, humanity bringing down the divine nature to our bearing and perception; “the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, declaring him to us.” “The Word made flesh” instructing the ignorant, cheering the disconsolate, directing the wanderer, refreshing the weary; guiding our waking, guarding our sleeping moments; “a partaker of our flesh and blood, that he may be a merciful High-priest.” Do we not behold that Word declared the Son of God with power; men adoring and submitting; the powers of hell broken and discomfited; the triumph of heaven complete. “The Lord our God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” “Fear not, O Israel, the Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going-out,

“and thy coming-in, from this time forth, and even
“for evermore.”

[A] Jacob was born to Isaac when he was sixty years old; and at the time he went down to Egypt, according to *his own declaration* to Pharaoh, he was one hundred and thirty; which, added to the twenty-five years of Abraham's pilgrimage, from his leaving Ur of the Chaldees, to the birth of Isaac, make two hundred and fifteen. He and his posterity continued in Egypt a like period of two hundred and fifteen years. So that it is plain Moses reckoned in the whole sum of four hundred and thirty years, all the pilgrimages of Abraham and his posterity, from his first leaving his kindred and father's house in Mesopotamia, down to their triumphant exit from Egypt, and their setting out in the conquest of Canaan, whose iniquity, though not before, was now full.

LECTURE XIX.

EXODUS XIV. 21, 22.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

IN the little benefits which men confer upon each other, it generally happens that some untoward circumstance insinuates itself, and occasions, to one of the parties at least, mortification, disappointment, or disgust; for nothing human is perfect. A gracious action is frequently resented as an injury, from the ungracious manner in which it is performed. I am charmed with both the matter of that kindness shown me, and the affectionate disposition which prompted it;—But alas, it arrived an hour too late! Another prevented my wishes; and I prized not the blessing, because I was not instructed in its value, by feeling the want of it. This favour bestowed on me is very great; but it is not precisely the thing which I looked for; or it is so clogged with some unpleasant condition, that I would rather be without it; it affords me present relief, but will it not involve me in greater difficulties hereafter? Had I

failed in my expectations from this quarter, I should easily have gained my end by applying to another friend. In a word, there is a perpetual something in the friendly communications of men, which continually mars the worth of what is given and received. And no wonder, if we consider that favours are not always granted from affection, nor accepted with gratitude. But the bounties of heaven possess every quality that can enhance their value, and endear their author to a sensible heart. Infinitely valuable in themselves, they flow from love. The "good and perfect gifts which come down from the Father of lights," are given "liberally, and without upbraiding." Exactly what we need, they come precisely at the moment when we want them most, or when they are most beneficial to us. Worthy of God to bestow, they cannot be unworthy of us to receive. Were he to withhold his gracious aid, in vain should we look for relief from any other quarter. Productive of present satisfaction and joy, his benefits involve us in no future distress, shame, or remorse. Serviceable to the body, they are at the same time improving to the mind. Important and interesting for time, they have an influence upon eternity.

The gracious interpositions of Jehovah, in behalf of his chosen people, have this peculiar recommendation to our attention, as to that people's grateful observation and acknowledgment—that they were not in the usual course of things; they were the fruits of the constant and unremitting care of a

special providence ; they were the suspension or alteration of the established laws of nature ; they were the operation of a mighty hand and an out-stretched arm, sensibly controlling the winds, the waves, and the clouds ; and subduing the most ungovernable elements to its purpose. Other parents are endued with transitory affections and attachments suited to the transitory nature of the trust committed to them. The hen tends her unfledged brood with the vigilance of a dragon and the boldness of a lion. But maternal tenderness and anxiety diminish and expire with the occasion of them, namely, the weakness and inexperience of her young ones. When the son is become a man, paternal care relaxes, and parental authority is at an end. But as the authority of our heavenly Father never ceases, so his bowels of compassion are never restrained ; his vigilance is never lulled to rest, his care never suspended ; because his offspring is, to the last, impotent, improvident, imperfect.

In vain had Israel, by a series of miracles unparalleled in the annals of mankind, been rescued from Egyptian oppression, had not the same Almighty arm which delivered them at first, continued to protect and support them. The strength of Egypt, broken as it was, had been sufficient to force them back. The wilderness itself had been fatal to them, without the opposition of a foe. How easily are the greatest deliverances forgotten ; how soon are the most awful appearances familiarized to

the mind! The very first threatening of danger effaces from the memory of these Israelites all impression of the powerful wonders which had just passed before them, and eclipses the glory of the cloud which, at that very instant, presented itself to their eyes, and overshadowed their heads. But let not self-flattery impose upon us, as if we were more faithful and obedient than they were. It is the mere deception of vanity and self-love to suppose, that "if one were to arise from the dead we "would be persuaded;" that if we saw a miracle wrought we would believe; that if we heard Christ teach in our streets we would "forsake all and follow him." The man whom the usual appearances of nature do not move, would soon become insensible to more uncommon phenomena. For extraordinary things frequently repeated are extraordinary no longer, and consequently soon lose their force. If the daily miracles of God's mercy and loving kindness fail to convince men, what reason is there to hope that mere exertions of power would produce a happier effect? If Christ, speaking by his word and ministering servants, be treated with neglect, is it likely that his *person* would be held in veneration? If men "hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one "rose from the dead." Is it not notorious, that Christ's personal ministrations were slighted, his miracles vilified, his character traduced?

Whose conduct is the more absurd and criminal—that of Pharaoh, in pursuing after, and attempting

to bring back, a people who had been a snare and a curse to himself and his kingdom; or that of Israel, in trembling at the approach of an enemy whom God had so often subdued under them? Frail nature looks only to the creature; to surrounding mountains, opposing floods, persecuting adversaries:—hence terror, confusion, and astonishment. But faith eyes the pillar, the residence of divine majesty, and then mountains sink, seas divide, the chariot and horsemen are overthrown. Every passion, when it becomes predominant, renders us silly and unreasonable; and none more so than fear. In danger and distress it is natural, but it is foolish, to impute to another the evils which we fear or feel. It seems to be an alleviation of our own misery, if we can contrive to shift the blame of it upon the shoulders of our neighbour. Hence Moses is loaded with the imputation of a deliberate design of involving his nation in this dire dilemma, between Pharaoh and the Red Sea, and of selling them to the foe. A high and responsible situation is far from being an enviable one. If things go well, the conductor of the undertaking receives but a divided, a mutilated praise. If an enterprize fail, the whole blame of the miscarriage is imputed to him. The astonished multitude dare not directly attack God himself. No: the cloudy pillar hangs over their heads, ready to burst in thunder and fire on the man who presumed to aim his shafts so high. But their impiety seeks the pitiful shelter of a subterfuge;

they murmur against Moses, because they imagine they can do it with impunity: and they think to escape the resentment of the master, though they are wounding him through the sides of his servant. Mark yet again the folly and unreasonableness of fear. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore has thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." What were they afraid of now? A grave in the wilderness. What do they put in comparison with, and prefer to, it? A grave in Egypt. It was a grave at the worst. Their wretched lives had got at least a short reprieve. If they died now, they died at once; and died like men, defending their lives, liberty, and families, not pouring out life, drop by drop, under the whip of a task-master. But slavery has broken their spirit. They are reduced to the lowest pitch of human wretchedness; for this surely is the last stage of it:—"It had been better for us to serve Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

To this view of abject degeneracy and dejection, two objects are placed in contrast—the calmness and intrepidity of Moses, and the majesty and power of God. In contemplating the former of these, as one great object of these Lectures is to

unfold human character, and to hold up to imitation and applause praise-worthy conduct, let me endeavour to fix your attention upon the more obvious features of the great man who is here drawing his own portrait.

All the great interests of Moses were embarked with those of the commonwealth of Israel. His lot was cast into the common lap. He had made a sacrifice unspeakably greater than any individual of the congregation had done. His prospects, for either himself or his family, were neither brighter nor more flattering than those of the obscurest Hebrew among them. If there were danger from the pursuing host of Pharaoh, his share, most assuredly, was not less than that of any other man. He had rendered himself peculiarly obnoxious to that stern, unrelenting tyrant, and must have been among the first victims of his resentment. But the pressing danger of Moses did not arise from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but from an intimidated, distracted multitude, who were ready to wreak their vengeance on whoever might first meet their resentment, or could be most plausibly charged as the author of their misfortunes. The composure of Moses, in such circumstances, is therefore justly to be considered as an instance of uncommon heroism and magnanimity. But why do we talk of heroism? the man who fears God knows no other fear. In the confidence of faith, though he knew not yet which way God was to work deliverance for Israel, he thus attempts to diffuse the hope which he felt

irradiating his own soul: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to-day: for the Egyptians, whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

Let me intreat you to observe that the agent in this great transaction is also the historian of it; and that the resolution and spirit of the one is to be equalled only by the modesty and simplicity of the other. In the hands of one of the eloquent orators of Greece or Rome, what a figure would this passage of the life of the Jewish legislator have made, could we suppose them entering into the situation of a stranger, with the warmth which they feel in delineating the characters and conduct of their own heroes, and embellishing the dignity of modest merit with the glowing ornaments of rhetoric? But Scripture says much by saying little. And the meek reserve, the unaffected conciseness of the sacred historian infinitely exceed the diffusive and laboured panegyrics of profane poetry or history. We have already perhaps deviated too far from that beautiful simplicity; and diminished, instead of magnifying our object, by multiplying words. We hasten therefore, with our author, to contemplate an object of infinitely higher consideration than himself; to which he constantly brings his own, and instructs us to bring our tribute of praise.

Behold the obstructions which nature, and art, and accident have assembled to distress, to discou-

rage, and to destroy the church of God! An impassable ridge of mountains upon the right hand and upon the left; the roaring sea in front; a powerful, exasperated, revengeful enemy following close behind; internal weakness, irresolution, and dissension: the voice of sedition is loud; Moses is on his face before God. In such a situation as this Omnipotence alone can save. No voice but that of a God is worthy of being heard. Be silent then, O Heavens, and listen, O earth, it is God who speaks. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward!" What sublimity, simplicity, and force are here! "Go forward!" What, into the raging billows? Great God, thy commands declare thy name and thy nature? What power except thine own but must have been exposed and disgraced by assuming such a high tone of authority! But what obstacle can oppose Him who said, "Let there be light; and there was light?" "Who spake, and it was done; who gave commandment, and it stood fast?"

The heart is agitated with a mixture of fear and joy as we proceed. "The Lord God has given the word,—Let the people go forward." When lo, the conducting pillar instantly changes its position, and solemnly retreats to the rear of the Israelitish host. The word given clears all the way before them, and "the glory of the Lord becomes their rereward." Now behold the double effect of this symbol of the divine presence! To Israel the cloud

is all light and favour; to the Egyptians all darkness and dismay. To those, "night shineth as the day—to these, there is obscurity at noon-day; "And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed, and went behind them; "and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians, and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night." Awful distinction! Where shall we find the solution of the difficulty? Where, but in this, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; "and whom he will he hardeneth."

To prepare us for the history of the miracle which follows, give your attention, for a few moments, to what every man and woman among you may have observed a thousand and a thousand times. Go to the bank of the river, go to the shore of the sea, and twice in every twenty-four hours, as certainly as light proceeds from the sun, what is now dry land will be covered with water, and what is now overflowed shall infallibly become dry ground. Further, when a little wandering star, called the moon, is in this direction, or in that, the whole waters of the globe, in the ocean, in the seas, in the rivers, are elevated or depressed to such a certain degree. Let that planet be in an eastern, or a western direction, the tide is precisely at the same pitch of height or depth. After we have made this remark,

which is obvious to the notice, and level to the understanding of a child; the question will naturally occur, What, does this never fail? May we depend, and act, upon the certainty of such a regular succession and change taking place? Do the waters of the earth thus certainly feel, or seem to feel, the various appearances of the moon? Then it cannot be without the design and interposition of an intelligent and powerful Cause, which never misses its aim, is never off its guard, is never thwarted or defeated by unforeseen obstacles. Then that invisible, unknown, incomprehensible power may exercise a discretionary influence over the stream of a particular river, over the billows of a particular sea. He may, with or without apparent second causes, make the current overflow its banks, or the channel to become dry.

Or, to make another appeal to common observation and experience, when the sun is in such a certain position with respect to our earth, and the wind blows in such a direction, the water in that lake will be liquid and transparent, and the smallest, lightest pebble will sink to the bottom. But let the elevation of the sun be changed to an angle somewhat more acute, and let the wind shift into the opposite quarter, then, beyond all doubt, the self-same water shall become solid as the rock, lose its transparency, and become capable of sustaining any weight that can be put upon it. How easy had it been for Him who produces regularly these changes, in the course of every changing year, to

have given the globe such a position, as would have rendered the hoary deep one vast mountain of ice, all the year round, or have prevented a single drop of water from ever being congealed. And “wherefore should it be thought a thing incredible” that such a One, willing to make his power known and his grace felt, should, at his own time, and in his own way, do that in a particular instance, which he could have done perpetually and universally. Grant me the usual appearances and operations of nature, and I am prepared for all the uncommon, miraculous phenomena with which the God of nature may see meet to present me. We come, accordingly, to the history of dividing the Red Sea, perfectly convinced that he who made it at first, can make of it whatever he pleases; and we are thoroughly satisfied that the occasion of such a notable miracle, as it is related by Moses, was entirely worthy of it.

If it be a just rule in criticism, that a Deity is never to be introduced, but when his interposition is necessary, and on occasions becoming his dignity, the Mosaic account of this wonderful event stands fully justified in point of taste, as well as of authenticity. The powerful rod is once more stretched out. The east wind blows. The sea retires. And a safe and easy passage is opened for Israel through the channel of the deep. “This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” The word which commands the pro-

gress also prepares the way. As, in latter times, by the effectual working of the same almighty power, the grace which cured the father's unbelief, at the self-same instant likewise cast the devil out of the son. It is the sensible language of the common proverb, "The *king* said, Sail: but " the *wind* said, No." The command of the King of kings alone procures prompt obedience from every creature; for all are his subjects in fact as well as of right. Thrones, principalities, and powers are all subject unto him; and, " a sparrow falleth not to the " ground without our heavenly Father." When we behold our blessed Saviour, in the New Testament, saying to the stormy wind and the foaming billows, " Peace, be still," and a great calm instantly ensuing, and compare it with the work of the great Jehovah under review, we are led directly to the conclusion of the Roman centurion, who observed the wonders attending the crucifixion, " Truly this " was the Son of God."

In the history of our own country there is a passage, which the event we are considering suggests to our thoughts, and which does honour to the piety, modesty, and good sense of the prince whom it concerns. Canute, one of the early kings of the southern division of England, justly disgusted at the gross and impious adulation of some of his courtiers, who ascribed to him the attributes which belonged only to God, and called him " Lord of " the earth and of the sea;" that he might check their folly, by something more than a simple re-

proof, commanded his chair of state to be placed on the beach, near Southampton, during the flowing of the tide. Arrayed in his royal robes, and attended by all the nobility and great men of his court, he sat down with his face towards the sea, and thus addressed it, "I charge thee upon thy allegiance, O sea, to advance no further. Here, I, thy Lord, have thought proper to fix my station. Know thy distance: respect my authority; nor dare to touch the feet of thy sovereign, under pain of his highest displeasure." The swelling billows, regardless of his command and threatenings, continued to rush in, advanced impetuously to the steps of his throne, and speedily constrained the monarch and his train to retire. Upon which, turning round to his flatterers, he observed, "that He only deserved to be acknowledged as Lord of the land and of the sea, whose will the winds and the waves obeyed."

The breadth of the passage opened through the Red Sea must have been very considerable indeed, to have afforded to such a multitude as four millions of people, for less there could not be, space to get over in a single night's time. To determine this we must have recourse to calculation. But your time being far spent, this, together with an attempt to solve some of the difficulties of the dispensation, and to remove some of the objections which infidelity has raised to the credibility or miraculousness of the history, must make a constituent part of another lecture.

In practically applying this subject, we may consider the Red Sea, by which the armies of Israel were stopped short, as an emblematical representation of that great fight of affliction, that sea of trouble, through which every believer must pass in his way to the heavenly Canaan. Through the furnaces of Egypt, through the paths of the Red Sea, through the swellings of Jordan, God's ancient people at length got possession of the promised land. And it is "through manifold tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of God." It is of importance not only that we be going forwards, but that we be making progress; that growth in grace should keep pace with the uninterrupted flux of human life. The course which Providence leads us, though neither the shortest nor the most desirable, will be found upon the whole the safest, the surest, and the best. The possession of Canaan is not always the next step to our escape from Egypt. Justification by the grace of God puts us beyond the reach of our enemies, and adoption makes good our title to "the inheritance of the saints in light;" but it is sanctification that makes us meet for the enjoyment of the purchased possession. The Red Sea seemed to put an end to Israel's progress, but it actually shortened the distance. So affliction, while it appears intended to overwhelm, is accelerating the believer's speed to his Father's house above. "All these things are against me," saith frail, faltering, erring man, in his haste. "We know that all things work together for good to

“them that love God,” saith the better informed, the experience-taught Christian, on reviewing the mysterious ways of Providence, and on having attained “the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.” If we look to the creature only, all is dark and comfortless; nothing but cloud. When through the creature we look to an invisible God, all is peace and joy. We cannot remove mountains, nor turn floods into dry ground. It is not meet we should be trusted with such power. Obedience is our proper province, submission to the will of God our truest wisdom, and when we follow the direction of Providence, our way cannot but be prosperous. “Lord, we will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Human conduct is a woeful inversion of this rule. We torment ourselves about the event, over which we have no power; and we trifle with the commandment, with which alone we have to do. We neglect our duty, and then foolishly and impiously complain that we are unkindly dealt by, when Providence promotes not, or crosses our inclinations. Let us show cheerful and unreserved compliance; and, be the issue what it may, whether our wishes be opposed or succeed, we shall at least have the consolation of reflecting, that the miscarriage is not chargeable to our own perverseness or folly. It is a dreadful, it is a two-edged evil, at once to lose our aim, and incur the just displeasure of God by disobedience. “Thy will, O Father,” “be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.” Amen.

LECTURE XX.

EXODUS XV. 1, 2.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

TO no one man has the world been so much indebted, for rational pleasure and useful knowledge, as to the inspired author of these sacred books. Moses, as he is the most ancient, so he is by far the best writer that ever existed. Never, in one and the same character, were united talents so various, so rare, and so valuable. He may without hesitation be pronounced the most eloquent of historians, the sublimest of poets, the profoundest of sages, the most sagacious of politicians, the most acute of legislators, the most intrepid of heroes, the clearest sighted of prophets, the most amiable of men. The qualities of his heart seem to strive for the mastery with those of the understanding. So that it is difficult to determine whether, as the reputed son of Pharaoh's daughter, as a voluntary exile from the splendour of a court, as the sympathizing friend of

his afflicted brethen, as the bold protector of virgin innocence, as the contented shepherd of Jethro's flock, as the magnanimous assertor of Israelitish liberty, or finally, as king in Jeshurun, ruling the thousands of Israel with meekness and wisdom—he most challenges our admiration and praise. Had the world never been favoured with his works, or were it now to be deprived of that precious treasure, the loss were inconceivably great. Who does not shudder at the thought? What a fearful gap would it make in the history of mankind! What a blow to taste, what a blank in science, what an impoverishing of the public stock of harmless pleasure, what an injury to the dearest, the best,—the everlasting interests of mankind!

The venerable man who has, for so many evenings past, condescended to delight and instruct us, by the relation of events the most singular, interesting, and important, assumes this night a new character; and in strains the sweetest and boldest that bard ever sung; in verses the loftiest that the imagination of poet ever dictated, rouses, warms, transports the mind. We forget the distance of three thousand years. We feel ourselves magically conveyed to the banks of the Red Sea. We join in the acclamations of the redeemed of the Lord, as this song of Moses swells upon our ear. “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. For the horse of

“Pharaoh went in with his chariots, and with his
“horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought
“again the waters of the sea upon them; but the
“children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of
“the sea. The depths have covered them: they
“sink into the bottom as a stone.” How wonder-
fully suited to each other are the event and the cele-
bration of it!

In fulfilling the promise made in the conclusion of the last lecture, and in executing the business of the present, three objects are proposed. First, to attempt a vindication of the history of the passage of the Red Sea, from some objections which have been made to the credibility or miraculousness of it. Secondly, to make a few criticisms on the sacred hymn which was composed on the occasion, and now in part read in your hearing; in the view of pointing out a few of its more striking beauties. And, thirdly, to make a few remarks on sacred poesy in general, tending to evince its superior excellency, and to point out the delicacy and difficulty of attempting to amplify or imitate, what the inspired poets have written as helps to devotion. In the first, I shall without ceremony or apology, borrow the assistance of the pious and learned author of *Dissertations, historical, critical, theological, and moral, on the most memorable events of the OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT history*,—James Saurin, late minister of the French church at the Hague. In the second, I shall submit to be instructed by an ingenious, pious, and eloquent

professor of rhetoric in the university of Paris, who has made choice of this passage, expressly for the purpose of exemplifying the majesty, beauty, and simplicity of the Scripture style, [Rollin]. And, in the third, I shall do little more than transcribe from an elegant, penetrating, and instructive moralist of our own age and country, [Johnson]. To return :

If we collect the several circumstances of this wonderful piece of history, it will readily be acknowledged, that there is here presented to the mind one of the greatest, or rather a series of the greatest miracles, which the hand of Omnipotence ever wrought in behalf of any nation. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if the enemies of revelation have endeavoured to sully their lustre, and to impeach their credibility.

Three methods have been employed for this purpose—To ascribe those events to natural causes—To put them on a footing with others related in profane history, and—To represent them as contradictory and inconsistent. Three bulwarks of infidelity ; as many grounds of triumph for truth.

First, these events, which we ascribe entirely to the almighty power of God, have been accounted for from the common and natural operation of cause and effect. Eusebius has preserved and transmitted to us a fragment from an ancient author, Artapanes, to this purpose : “ Those of Memphis, one of the
“ chief cities of ancient Egypt, allege that Moses
“ perfectly understood the country ; that he had

“ accurately observed the ebbing and flowing of the
“ sea, and took advantage of the retreat of the tide
“ to lead the people over. But they of Heliopolis
“ relate the matter differently, saying, that while
“ the king was pursuing the Israelites, Moses, by
“ the command of Heaven, struck the waters with a
“ rod, upon which they immediately separated, and
“ left a spacious and safe passage for that great mul-
“ titude; and, that the Egyptians attempting to
“ follow them, the same way, were dazzled and
“ confounded by preternatural fires, lost their way,
“ and by the reflux of the sea, were overtaken in the
“ midst of the channel, and thus all perished either
“ by water or by fire.”

Now, granting to this quotation all the force that unbelief can give it, this evidently appears upon the face of it, that Moses has vouchers of his divine legation, even in Egypt, even among the idolaters themselves. If the Memphites accuse our historian of endeavouring to make a natural, pass for a miraculous event, the Heliopolitans acknowledge, that it was preternatural, and ascribe it to an immediate interposition of Heaven. And this concession is important, when we consider that it comes from the mouth of an enemy.

Again, the supposition of the Memphites must be rejected by all those who pay any regard to the authority of Moses, and of the other sacred writers. He himself indeed admits, that the effect was forwarded by the assistance of a strong east-wind.

And whatever he ascribes to that may seem so far to derogate from the greatness of the miracle. But it is no less true, that he throws out nothing like an insinuation that the passage of the vast host of Israel was produced by the intervention of second causes. And all the inspired authors who, after him, have mentioned it or alluded to it, acknowledge *only* a supernatural agency. Thus Joshua, who was an eye-witness, and a party deeply concerned in the event: "For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever." Thus the Psalmist: "He turned the sea into dry land; they went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him." And again: "He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and he made the waters to stand as an heap." And again: "He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness." And the Apostle: "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned." So that Moses, Joshua, David, and Paul, have but one and the same opinion on this subject.

But farther, the essence of a miracle does not always consist in counteracting or suspending the

laws of nature. One of the most contemptible of the adversaries of religion, [Spinoza] has weakly imagined, that by a single objection, he was able to invalidate one of the bulwarks and shake one of the pillars of revelation. "These miraculous effects" says he, are referred, by the confession of Scripture historians themselves, to the operation of "second causes. It was by warming the body of a "child, that Elijah brought him to life again. It "was by applying clay, or dust mingled with spit- "tle, to the eyes of a blind man, that Jesus Christ "restored him to sight. It was by a wind, that "Moses brought locusts upon Egypt, and obtained "a passage through the Red Sea." To this it is replied—That the most common and natural things become miracles, when they present themselves precisely at the time, and in the manner, prescribed by him who commands their appearance, for the confirmation and establishment of a certain doctrine. What so natural and common, for example, as to see the sun shining, one moment, in full and unobstructed glory, and the next darkened and concealed by clouds? But, if a person publishing a new doctrine as divine, should undertake to prove his mission by changing the appearance of the bright orb of day, at his pleasure, and by showing him either in unclouded majesty, or eclipsed and shorn of his beams, according as he gave the word; and should we behold this very ordinary natural phenomenon actually and uniformly obeying the mandate, would not such an event, however natural in itself,

become preternatural and miraculous from its circumstances? Thus, there might be occasion for the influence of the wind to favour and facilitate the passage of Israel. But how was it possible for their leader, by mere human sagacity, to discover that a wind from such a quarter, springing up exactly at such an hour, should harden the bottom of the deep?

But supposing the philosophy of Moses sufficiently accurate, to assure him that at such a time he might in safety march over his cumbersome retinue; could it inform him also that Pharaoh and his captains would certainly be mad enough to follow them through that dangerous route? Could it assure him the rashness of the tyrant, and the law which regulated the flowing of the sea, would exactly keep time, so as effectually to produce the destruction of his whole army? The flux and reflux of the tide were known to Moses; but, Was it entirely unknown to the Egyptians? What, in so great an army, led by the sovereign in person, in a land renowned for natural knowledge, was there no man astronomer enough to know, that the difference of a few hours is every thing in a case of this sort; that to be in such a spot, at such a time, was inevitable destruction! Incredible! Impossible!

Finally, it is altogether inconceivable that the space of three or four hours, the utmost that an ebb merely natural could have afforded them, was sufficient for the transition of such an astonishing multitude as that which Moses conducted. The learned Calmet has so fully demonstrated this point, as to

enforce the conclusion, that no degree of human knowledge could have disclosed to Moses a foresight of the events which proved so propitious to him. Not therefore to the superiority of genius, but to a power divine, the praise is to be ascribed. And to the same principle we must recur, in order to explain the mighty difference which Providence puts between the Israelites and the Egyptians, in the midst of the Red Sea.

Attempts have been made to debase the dignity of this great event, by reducing it to the level of similar appearances, recorded by profane historians. That degenerate son of Israel, Josephus, first started this objection. These are his words, "This," speaking of the passage of the Red Sea, "I have" related with all the circumstances, as I find them in "our sacred authors. Nobody ought to think it an "incredible thing, that a people which lived in the "innocence and simplicity of the first ages, might "have found a way through the sea to save themselves. Whether it was that the sea itself opened it "for them, or whether it was done by the will of God: "Since the same thing happened long after to the "Macedonians, when they passed through the sea of "Pamphylia, under the conduct of Alexander, "when God thought fit to make use of that people "for the destruction of the Persian empire, as it is "affirmed by all the historians who have written the "life of that prince. However, I leave all men to "judge of this matter as they think fit." Thus far Josephus,

The other instances which some presume to be put in competition with this, are the approach of Scipio, with his army, to the attack of New Carthage, by means of an extraordinary ebb at the change of the moon, recorded by Livy : a similar ebb of the river Euphrates, related by Plutarch in his life of Lucullus : and a flood altogether as singular, upon the coast of Holland, in the year 1672, which kept up for twelve hours together, and was apparently the means of preserving that Republic from the consequences of a joint attack of the fleets of England and France. It is handed down to us in the life of the famous Admiral de Ruyter, who had the command of the Dutch squadron at that time. Neither your time nor patience admitting of an inquiry into the truth of these several facts, we satisfy ourselves with observing, that admitting them to be true, not one of them is any way worthy to be compared with the Mosaic account of the passage across the Red Sea. The pointed and particular prediction of Moses ; the rod employed, and the instantaneousness of the effect ; the facility and speed of the passage ; the rashness of the Egyptians ; their tragical end ; every thing in short concurs to render this an unparalleled event. And nothing but an immoderate desire of depreciating the miracles of the sacred history could have attempted to diminish this celebrated transit, into a comparison with any of the other events which are alluded to.

The third objection is, to the truth of the history ; pretended to be taken from the history itself. The

time allotted by Moses, by his own account, for the congregation, consisting of so many myriads, to pass over, is considered, by the objectors, as much too short for the purpose. But in order to support it, they are obliged to go into uncertain, fanciful, and unsupported conjectures about the breadth of the Red Sea, at the place where the passage was opened. They make the breadth of that passage just what it suits their own arbitrary conjecture and calculation. They must needs constrain a great multitude, in very peculiar circumstances, unaccustomed to discipline, stimulated by fear, and borne on the wings of hope, to move with the leisure and deliberation of a regular army. They will not deign to acknowledge the power and grace of the Most High in every part of the transaction. They overlook the description given of that people, Psalm cv. 37, as a people full of strength and vigour, and "not one sickly among them." They forget what God himself soon after says of them, "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." We conclude, that as the case taken all together was singular, unprecedented, and followed by nothing like it: so the particular circumstances of it are likewise singular and unexampled; and will, with every candid person, bear out Moses, the sacred historian, against the charge of being inconsistent with himself.

We proceed to the second object which we proposed, namely, To point out a few of the more

striking beauties of the sacred Song, which was composed and sung, in grateful acknowledgment of that great deliverance which we have been contemplating. What will undoubtedly give it a high value in the estimation of many is, that it is the most ancient morsel of poetry which the world is in possession of: being three thousand, three hundred, and thirty-seven years old, that is, six hundred and forty-seven years before Homer, the most ancient and the best of heathen bards, lived or sung. But its antiquity is its slightest excellency. The general turn of it is great, the thoughts nobly simple, the style sublime, the expression strong, the pathos sweet, the figures natural and bold. It abounds throughout with images which at once strike, warm, astonish, and delight. The occasion of it you well know. The poet's view is to indulge himself in transports of joy, admiration, and gratitude, and to inspire the people with the same sentiments. Accordingly he thus impetuously breaks out.

Ver. 1. "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Here, the tremendous majesty of God the deliverer, and the lively gratitude of the people saved, the leading object of the piece, are placed instantly and powerfully in view; and they are never dropt, for one moment, to the end. *I*, in the singular number, is much more energetic and affecting than *we* in the plural, would have been. The triumph of Israel

over the Egyptians did not resemble the usual triumphs of nation over nation; where the individual is overlooked and lost in the general. No: every thing here is peculiar and personal. Every Israelite for himself reflects with joy on his own chains now for ever broken in pieces. He seems to exult over his own tyrant-master, now subdued under him; and hails his personal liberty, now effectually secured. For it is natural to the heart of man, in extreme danger, to refer every thing to himself, and to consider himself as all in all. “The *horse* and his rider hath he thrown into the sea:” For the same reason the *horse* is much more forcible than *horses* would have been; it marks strongly the suddenness, the universality, the completeness of the destruction. The Egyptian cavalry, numerous, formidable, covering the face of the ground, is represented, in a moment, by a single effort, at one blow, overthrown, overwhelmed, as if they had been but *one* horse and *one* rider.

Verse 2. “JEHOVAH is my strength and song, “and he is become my salvation: He is my God, “and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s “God, and I will exalt him.” Is it lawful to say, that the poet employs the most exquisite art in representing this great deliverance, in every part, and every view of it, as the work of JEHOVAH: the great “I AM THAT I AM:” that name of God by which he chose to be known to Israel, through the whole of those memorable transactions? My *strength*, that is, the source or cause of my strength:

and it points out the great God as the courage and force of Israel, without the necessity of their exerting any of their own. "*My Song*," that is, the subject of it. No instrument divides the praise with him. No power, no wisdom is employed but his own. He planned, arranged, executed every thing by himself. "He is become my *salvation*." The fine writers of Greece or Rome would probably have said, "He hath saved me." But Moses says much more; The Lord himself hath undertaken to work deliverance for me: He hath made my salvation his own, his personal concern, and is become to me every thing I can want.

"*He is my God*." Every word is emphatical. "*He*," in opposition to the gods of Egypt, which cannot hear, nor see, nor save. "*My God*:" All-attentive to *my* interest and safety, as if he had no creature but *me* to care for: and therefore *my* God: For I acknowledge not, I never will acknowledge, any other. "*My Father's God*." This repetition is most beautifully tender and pathetic. He whose greatness I adore, is not a strange God, unknown till now; a protector for a moment. No, he is the ancient patron of my family; his goodness is from generation to generation. I have a thousand *domestic* proofs of his constant, undiminished affection; and he is now making good to me, only that which he solemnly promised to my *forefathers*. And how has he effected this?—

"The LORD is a *Man of War*."

~ An ordinary writer would probably have repre-

sented the Almighty here as the God of armies : and as such, discomfiting the host of Pharaoh. But Moses does more ; he brings him forth as a champion, a soldier ; puts the sword into his hand, and exhibits him fighting his battles, the battles of Israel.

The fourth and fifth verses contain a very fine display and amplification of the simple idea suggested in the first, “ The *horse* and his *rider*.”

“ PHARAOH’S chariots and his host hath he cast
“ into the sea : his chosen captains are also drowned
“ in the Red Sea, the depths have covered them,
“ they sank into the bottom as a stone.” Image rises and swells above image. Pharaoh’s *chariots*, his *hosts*, his *chosen captains*—cast into the sea, *drowned* in the Red Sea—“ *Covered* with the depths, *sunk* to the bottom, at once, as a *stone*. Notwithstanding their pride and insolence, they can make no more resistance to the power of Jehovah, than a stone launched from the arm of a strong man into the flood.

Every writer but a Moses must have stopped short here, or flattened his subject, by repeating or extending the same ideas. But the seraphic poet, upborne by an imagination which overleaps the boundaries of the world, and an enthusiasm which cannot rest in any creature, springs up to the Creator himself, in these rapturous strains :

“ Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in
“ thy power : Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed
“ in pieces the enemy. In the greatness of thine

“excellency, Thou hast overthrown them that rose
“up against thee.”

When the heart is full of an object, it turns it round as it were on every side, returns to it again and again; never tires in contemplating it, till admiration is lost in astonishment. Moses, after this effusion of joy and praise, returns again to the matter of fact: but not in the language of mere description, as in the 4th verse; but in a continuation of his bold, animated address to God himself; which gives it a life and fervour superior to any thing human. As if the strength of one element had not been sufficient to destroy God's enemies, every element lends its aid. The deep opens its mouth, the fire consumes, the wind rages; all nature is up in arms to avenge the cause of an incensed God. The poet ennobles the wind, by making God the principle of it; and animates the fire, by making it susceptible of fear. In the same style of address to God, he throws himself as it were into the person and character of the enemy, previous to their defeat; and pours forth their sentiments of threatening and slaughter, the more strongly to mark their disappointment, by contrasting the folly and impotence of man, with the power and justice of God. “The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.” You see here vengeance hastening to its object, regardless of opposition. The words, unconnected with a conjunc-

tion, seem to hurry on like the passion that prompts to them. And in what does it issue? "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them." And the picture is finished with this happy stroke, "They sank as lead in the mighty waters."

But I feel I have undertaken a task far beyond my ability, and the limits of your time; and therefore break off with another borrowed remark, namely, that whatever grandeur and magnificence we may discover in this song, as it stands in such a place and connection; its beauty and force must greatly rise upon us, were we permitted to penetrate through the mysterious scene, concealed behind the veil of this great event. For it is certain that this deliverance from Egypt covers and represents salvation of a superior and more extensive nature. The apostle of the Gentiles teaches us to consider it as a type of that freedom which the Christian obtains by the waters of baptism, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, from the yoke of the prince of this world. And the prophet, in the book of Revelation, makes it to shadow forth the final and great deliverance of the redeemed; by introducing the assembly of those who have overcome the beast, holding the harps of God in their hands, and singing "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints? Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come

“ and worship before thee ; for thy judgments are “ made manifest.” Now, as the Scriptures declare, that the wonders of this second deliverance shall infinitely surpass the first, and shall entirely obliterate the remembrance of it ; we may easily believe that the beauties of the *spiritual* sense of this divine poem may totally eclipse those of the *historical*.

Having endeavoured, imperfectly, to unfold some of the excellencies of this ancient sacred composition, I should proceed, as I proposed, to point out the delicacy of attempting, and the difficulty of succeeding, in imitating or extending devotional poetry : but your time and patience perhaps will be better employed in hearing me read to you a short passage, containing the sentiments of an excellent modern critic [Johnson] on the subject ; with which I shall conclude this exercise.

“ It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship ; and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry. That they have very seldom attained their end is sufficiently known ; and it may not be improper to inquire, why they have miscarried.

“ Let no pious ear be offended, if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion, may, indeed, be defended in a didactic poem ; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will not lose it, because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and grandeur of ~~na~~

ture, the flowers of spring, and the harvests of autumn, the vicissitudes of the tide, and the revolutions of the sky; and praise the Maker for his works, in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

“Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

“The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few; and being few, are universally known; but few as they are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

“Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination; but religion must be shown as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is known already.”

“From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension, and elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped for by Christians from metri-

cal devotion. Whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; Infinity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.

“ The employments of pious meditations are faith, thanksgiving, repentance, and supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance trembling in the presence of the judge is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topics of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

“ Of sentiments, purely religious, it will be found, that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that verse can do is to help the memory and delight the ear; and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of Christian Theology are too simple for eloquence; too sacred for fiction; and too majestic for ornament: to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.”

LECTURE XXI.

EXODUS XV. 23—27.

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah; for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and three-score and ten palm-trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

UNLESS the mind be under the regulating power of religion, it will be perpetually losing its balance and changing its tenour. At one time it will be accelerated into indecent and dangerous speed, through the impulse of desire, ambition, or revenge: at another, it is chilled into languor and inaction, through fear, despondency, and disappointment. We shall behold the same person, now believing

things incredible, and attempting things impracticable; and anon, staggering at the shadow of a doubt, and shrinking from the slightest appearance of difficulty and danger. Insolent, fierce, and overbearing in prosperity, the unsteady creature becomes grovelling, dispirited, and mean in adversity. "It is a good thing," therefore, "that the heart be established by grace!" Grace, that calm, steady, uniform principle, which veers not with every wind of doctrine; rises not nor falls, like the mercury in the tube, with every variation of the atmosphere, according to the alternate transitions of disappointment and success, censure and applause, health and sickness, youth and age. In the day of prosperity, religion saith to the soul where it dwells, "Rejoice," and in the day of adversity, "Consider;" for a wise and a merciful God hath set the one over against the other. This divine principle corrects immoderate joy, saying to the happy, "Be not high-minded, but fear;" it consoles and supports the miserable, by breathing the sweet assurance that the "light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The want of this balance of the soul, and the dangerous consequences of that want, are strikingly exemplified in the history of the chosen people, whom Providence, by a series of miracles, undertook to conduct from Egypt to Canaan. Elated or depressed by the aspect of the moment, we find them haughty in the hour of victory, and sunk into

despair by a defeat. The *deepness* of the waters of the Red Sea, and their miraculous separation, afford matter of triumph to-day: the *bitterness* of the waters of Marah causes universal discontent and dejection to-morrow. But alas! we need not recur to distant periods of history, for an example of the ruinous effects produced by a destitution of religious principle, and for a proof of the fatal power of unbelief. The history of every man's own experience is illustration sufficient. To what must we ascribe the envy, jealousy, rage, pride, resentment, timidity, diffidence, and dejection which successively and unremittingly agitate the human mind? Men walk by sight, not by faith. They feel the powers of the world that *is*, and are insensible of that which *is to come*. They look at "things temporal," and neglect those "which are unseen and eternal." They stand in awe of the creature, and despise the Creator. While then we discover, deplore, and condemn a selfish, a perverse, and discontented spirit, and an unbelieving heart in others, let us study, by the grace of God, to reform the same or like dispositions in ourselves.

What a magnificent concert filled the shores of the Red Sea after Israel had passed over! Every thing was suited to another. The words were adapted to the occasion; the music to the words; the performers to the music. There, we behold Moses leading the bolder, rougher notes of manly voices. Here, Miriam the prophetess, his sister, in sweet accord, blending the softer harmony of

female strains, with the notes of the timbrel, in praise of their great Deliverer. Never surely did such music strike the vault of heaven, and never shall again, "till the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; when they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away:" Never, till the song of Moses be closed with the song of the Lamb.

At length they quit the scene of their terror and of their triumph; for the world admits not of a long continuance of either; and they advance three days' march into the wilderness. Escaped effectually, and for ever, from the oppression of Egypt; no more opposed in front, by an unsurmountable barrier, nor hemmed in on either side by impassable mountains, nor pursued by a numerous and well-disciplined army; but the sea, once their hinderance, now their defence; every foe subdued; and the road to Canaan straight before them. What can now give disturbance? On how many circumstances does life and the comfort of it depend! The failure or disagreeable quality of one ingredient corrupts and destroys the whole. In Shur they found *no* water; in Marah they find water, but it is *bitter*. The unavoidable condition of a wilderness state! Always too little or too much! Here, there are children and penury; there, affluence and sterility. This year, there is drought parching and consuming every plant of the field: the next, an overflowing flood sweeping every thing before it; and unhappy

mortals are eternally augmenting the necessary and unavoidable evils of human life, by peevishness and discontent.

Oblige an ungrateful person ever so often, and disappoint or oppose him once, and the memory of a thousand benefits is instantly lost. All that Moses, all that God has done for Israel is forgotten, the moment that a scarcity of water is felt. For it is with this spirit, as in the case of ambition: Nothing *is* attained in the eye of ambition, while there is yet one thing *to be* attained. All the favour of Ahasuerus avails Haman nothing, while Mordecai the Jew sits in the king's gate. Thus ingratitude says, Nothing is granted, while one thing is denied me. One scanty meal in Shur, or one unpalatable beverage at Marah, has obliterated all remembrance of the recent wonders of Egypt; and the more recent miracles of the Red Sea. And as one evil quality is ever found in company with its fellows; we here find ingratitude and impiety toward God, blended with unkindness and unreasonableness toward man. And cowardice pitifully levels its keen arrows at the servant, not daring to attack the master. "The people murmured against Moses." A worldly mind under distress, either flies to the creature for help; or accuses the creature as the cause of its woe. Piety leads the soul directly to God; it views the calamity as his appointment; and finds its removal, its remedy, or its compensation in the divine mercy. Israel tastes the bitter

water, desponds, and charges Moses foolishly. Moses cries to God, and is enlightened.

Observe the goodness and long-suffering of God. Readier to listen to the entreaties of Moses, than to punish the perverseness and unbelief of the people. He instantly directs to a cure for the nitrous quality of the waters of Marah. "The Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

Of little consequence is it to inquire, because it is impossible to determine, whether the wood of this tree had in it an inherent virtue, which naturally corrected the brackish taste of the water; or whether the sweetening quality were preternaturally communicated to it, to fulfil the present design of Providence. Whether I see water sweetened by a log of wood cast into it, or issuing from the flinty rock, or flowing naturally in the brook; whether I see Israel fed with bread from heaven, or Moses and Christ subsisting forty days without bread at all; or mankind in general, supported by bread growing gradually out of the ground; I still behold but one and the same object; "good gifts coming down," but in so many different ways, "from the Father of lights." The wise man, in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, has made a happy use of this passage, to inculcate the necessity of using appointed means, in order to obtain success. "The Lord (says he) hath created medicines out of the earth, and he that is wise will not abhor them. Was

“not the water made sweet with wood, that the
“virtue thereof might be known? and he hath
“given men skill that he might be honoured in his
“marvellous works. With such doth he heal men,
“and taketh away their pains. My son, in thy
“sickness be not negligent: but pray unto the
“Lord, and he will make thee whole.”

A fondness for allegory has represented the effect produced, by this tree cast into the waters, as emblematical of the virtue of the cross, in sweetening and sanctifying affliction to the believer, and taking the sting out of death. Undoubtedly, when an object so important, and a doctrine so instructive, can by whatever means be impressed upon the heart, we ought not too squeamishly to reject applications and illustrations of this sort. In order to promote the ends of true piety, what though we relax a little of the laws of rigid criticism? If imagination serve as an handmaid to virtue and devotion, let men be as fanciful as they will. If a serious soul be edified or comforted, shall I mar his joy, and disturb his tranquillity, by forcing him to comprehend the meaning of Greek and Hebrew particles? Whether it be warrantable or not to give this evangelical turn to the passage before us, its moral intention and import will hardly be disputed. It exhibits the reluctance which men feel to encounter affliction; their impatience and unreasonableness under it; the wise design of Providence in afflictive dispensations, namely, to “prove men, whether they will
“diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord their

“ God, and do that which is right in his sight.” And, finally, it illustrates the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in counteracting one natural evil by another evil; making poison serve as an antidote to poison, and healing the greater plague of sin, by the less, that of suffering.

Some commentators have conjectured, that it was about this very spot that Hagar was relieved and supplied with water, she and her son, by the angel of the Lord, when they were banished from Abraham’s house; and they reprove the incredulity of the Israelites, by the example of her faith. After all, it was undoubtedly a very severe trial; whether we consider how much water, sweet water, is connected, not merely with the convenience and comfort, but with the very existence of human life; whether we estimate the immense quantity necessary for the support of such a vast multitude of men and women, besides cattle, or, the peculiar demand occasioned by a vertical sun, and a parched soil. We pass on from Marah, as men, and as the inhabitants of more favoured regions, praising God, “ who walks upon the clouds,” and refreshes us from Heaven above; gushes upon us in a thousand streams of limpid comfort from the earth beneath, and gently flows through every field in a tide of delight; and as Christians, we flee for refuge and refreshment to that *wonderful man*, described, in prophetic vision, in such beautiful figures as these, “ A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, “ and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water

“ in a dry place ; as the shadow of a great rock in a “ weary land.” Gold, silver, and precious stones are produced in small quantities, and are of difficult and dangerous investigation. And happily the life of man consists not in such things as these. Whereas the things which really minister to human comfort, and constitute the real support of human life, are poured down upon us with unbounded profusion. The choicest blessing which ever was bestowed upon the world is common and free to all, as the water in the stream ; as the light and air of heaven. —

But though the bitter waters are sweetened for present use, Israel must not think of continuing encamped by them. They are to be but the transient refreshment of the wayfaring man, not the stated supply of the Land of Promise. Whatever we have attained, whatever we enjoy, the voice of Providence still summons us away, saying, “ Arise ye, “ and depart, for this is not your rest.”

Their next journey is from Marah “ to Elim ; “ where were twelve wells of water, and threescore “ and ten palm-trees : and they encamped there by “ the waters.” In the preceding station, their provision was partly from nature, partly from the kindness of a gracious Providence. Nature furnished the substance, a miracle endowed it with the suitable qualities. But at Elim, Nature seems to do the whole, with her “ threescore and ten palm-trees, “ and twelve wells of water.” And what is Nature, but the great JEHOVAH performing the most astonish-

wallowed not in the profusion of Egypt, which they were obliged to purchase at the price of their liberty and blood.

When we hear of such an universal mutiny, for it was not the murmuring of a few factious discontented spirits, but of the whole congregation of Israel, what have we not to fear from the just resentment of a holy and righteous God, thus insulted by mistrust and unbelief? We find him immediately taking up the cause, and in a manner peculiar to himself. Wonder, O Heavens, and be astonished, O earth. "And the Lord said unto "Moses, Behold I will rain"—what? Fire and brimstone from Heaven, upon the generation of incorrigible rebels, until they be utterly consumed? No, but "I will rain bread from Heaven upon you." Is this thy manner with men, O Lord God? Surely, "it is of thy mercy we are not consumed, because "thy compassions fail not."

The historical fact which follows, as the accomplishment of this promise, is one of the most singular upon record; and so mixes itself with the leading objects of the New Testament dispensation, that it well merits a separate and particular consideration.

Being arrived at another of the great epochs, or periods of ancient history, the going out of Egypt; we shall make a brief recapitulation of the whole, from the beginning. The first great period of the history of the world is from the creation down to the deluge; containing the space of one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years; and a succession of

eight lives, from Adam to the six hundredth year of Noah. The second is from the flood to the calling of Abraham, and contains four hundred and twenty seven years; and a succession of ten lives, from the hundredth and eighth year of Shem, the Son of Noah, to the seventy-fifth of Abraham, the father and founder of the Jewish nation: six of the patriarchs, after the flood, being now dead, Noah, Phaleg, Rehu, Serug, Nahor, and Terah; and four of them still living, Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, and Heber. So that one life, that of Shem, connects the antediluvian world, and the call of Abraham. For he was ninety-eight years old before the flood came; and he lived till Abraham was one hundred and fifty, and Isaac fifty years old. The third grand period of the world, containing four hundred and thirty years, commences on the fifteenth day of the month Abib, which answers to the end of our April, or the beginning of May. And some learned chronologists have undertaken to prove, from the Scripture history, and from astronomical calculations, that Abraham departed from Haran, that the Paschal Lamb was sacrificed in Egypt, and that Christ expired upon the cross, as the propitiation for the sins of the world, on Calvary, in the identical month of the year, day of the month, and hour and minute of the day. This period contains a succession of seven lives, including Abraham's, from his seventy-fifth year, to the eightieth of the life of Moses.

From the creation, then, to the Exodus, is the space of two thousand five hundred and thirteen

years; and a succession of twenty-four lives. The date of this event, in relation to other important and well known events in the history of mankind, stands as follows: It happened after the death of Abraham, three hundred and thirty years. After the death of Isaac, two hundred and twenty-five. After the death of Jacob, one hundred and ninety-eight. After the death of Joseph, one hundred and forty-four. Before the destruction of Troy about three hundred. Before the first Olympiad, or the earliest reckoning of time among the Greeks, seven hundred and fourteen. Before the building of the temple, when the Israelitish glory was in its zenith, five hundred and six. Before the Babylonish captivity, nine hundred and sixty-three. Before the building of Rome, seven hundred and thirty-eight. Before Christ was born at Bethlehem, one thousand five hundred and fifty one. Before the present year 1801, three thousand three hundred and fifty-two.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? "A thousand years," O Lord, "in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night." "Our fathers, where are they? the prophets, do they live for ever?" "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise,

“ look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein
“ dwelleth righteousness.” “ So teach us to number
“ our days, that we may apply our hearts unto
“ wisdom.” “ Many shall come from the east, and
“ west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac,
“ and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” “ The
“ law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came
“ by Jesus Christ.” “ And he that sat upon the
“ throne said, Behold, I make all things new.” He
“ which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come
“ quickly. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

LECTURE XXII.

EXODUS XVI. 11—15.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost, on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

MAN, composed of body and spirit, is giving continual indication of the origin from which he springs. His creative imagination, his penetrating understanding; his quickness of apprehension, loftiness of thought, eagerness of desire, fondness of hope; nay, even his erect figure, and a countenance turned upward to the skies, bespeak him the Son of God, into whose nostrils Jehovah has breathed the breath of life, and whom he has framed after his own image. On the other hand, appetites perpetually craving a supply out of the earth; the law of his nature, which stretches him in a state of insensibility, upon

the lap of his mother, for one third of his existence, in order to support the employments of the other two; and rational powers subjected to the will of sense, show us a creature taken *from* the dust of the ground, always dependent upon it, and hastening to return thitherward again.

Providence permits us not for a moment to forget, who, and whence we are. Have we laboured an hour or two? Hunger, and thirst, and weariness irresistibly draw us to the grosser elements of which we are compounded. A little bread and water having dispensed their nourishing virtue, a short sleep having restored our wasted powers, the soul starts up into conscious immortality; it springs forward to eternity, grasps the globe, expatiates from sphere to sphere, ascends to the throne of God himself. At one time, we behold a grovelling contemptible being, all body, absorbed in the low and gross desire of the moment, a fit companion to the beasts that perish: and anon, we see that very same wretched creature, becoming all spirit, leaving the earth behind him, mixing with angels, and holding fellowship with the Father of spirits.

Religion is constantly aiming at the restoration of our fallen nature; is still exerting her quickening power, to raise the bestial into rational, the rational into divine; she graciously employs herself in gradually detaching us from things seen and temporal, and in uniting us to those which are unseen and are eternal. The world, on the contrary, is as

constantly striving to degrade, to depress, to extinguish the immortal principle, and to sink the man in the brute. Hence we see the worldling dreaming of much goods, laid up for many years; endeavouring to confer duration even upon his sensuality; while Christ teaches his disciples to pray, saying, "Give us *this* day our daily bread." And by this admonition, he powerfully checks immoderate anxiety about the future: "Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

To teach men their constant dependence, their provision is bestowed in a gradual, daily supply; not in heaps but in handfuls. And when God was pleased miraculously to feed Israel in the wilderness, for forty years together, the food of every day came in its day. All attempts to hoard were defeated. Every one's portion was sufficiently ample, and accumulation became a nuisance instead of wealth.

Men, under the impulse of their passions, sluggishly crawl or eagerly run to the objects of their pursuit; but God is ever advancing towards his in the same steady, majestic pace. When we hear of the birth of Moses, the deliverer of Israel, we immediately conclude that the time of their redemption is now at hand. But behold forty years elapse

before a single effort is made for this purpose. And it is then the feeble effort of a solitary individual, to avenge a private wrong; while the general enfranchisement seems rather retarded than accelerated by it; and another period of forty years passes, without one apparent step taken towards public liberty. The fetters of Egypt are at length broken, and Israel is enlarged; but the possession of Canaan is still at a distance; and a third space of forty years consumes that whole generation in the wilderness; and Moses their conductor dies at the age of one hundred and twenty years, before the sole of one foot enters into the land of promise, as a possession. So unlike are the preconceptions of erring men to the designs of the infinitely wise God.

When we behold that vast congregation, by such a display of Omnipotence, rescued from bondage, conducted through the Red Sea, made to triumph over all their enemies, we are apt to consider them as the favourites of Heaven, destined to personal honours and possessions. But the event teaches us to correct our hasty judgment, and instructs us, that not the particular interests of individuals, but the great interests of the church of God are the care of Heaven; that, though Aaron and his sons may die, the priesthood ever lives; and, that while prophet after prophet retires, it is only to make room for the Prince and Lord of all the prophets.

Of little consequence is it to obtain possession of expected good, unless we be fitted for the enjoyment of it. A nation of slaves was unqualified to exercise

the rights, and to enjoy the privileges of citizens. Israel had no existence in Egypt, but merely a natural one. They had no civil constitution, no laws, no government. To have been conducted directly to Canaan in such a state, had been the reverse of a benefit. Providence, therefore, thought proper to employ a series of years in the wilderness in training the people for empire; in modelling a government suitable to their future condition; and, by enacting wise laws respecting both religion and civil polity, prepared them for that exalted rank which they were to hold among the nations; and for that duration of power and importance, with which the salvation of the whole human race was so closely connected. Thus the eternal decree makes the possession of the heavenly Canaan sure to every heir of glory: which decree, the justifying grace and adopting love of his heavenly Father declare and confirm; but he is not brought home to his Father's house above, till through the school of discipline, and by the Spirit of holiness, he is "made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Men, through impatience and peevishness, miss the very end at which they aim. Canaan flies but the farther off, from being grasped at too soon. The homely provision brought from Egypt was now spent; the milk and honey of Canaan were not yet bestowed. The wilderness naturally produced nothing for food, hardly water to quench their thirst. The wonders of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea,

the sweetening of the bitter waters of Marah, all, all is forgotten the moment distress comes upon them. "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness." God immediately takes up the cause as his own; but instead of expressing the resentment of an insulted sovereign and benefactor, He declares his gracious resolution to overcome this ungracious spirit by compliance and kindness; and men, unworthy of the meanest earthly fare, have a promise of a daily supply of bread from heaven. But as God does not always withhold in displeasure, so he does not always grant from love. When Providence deigns to indulge the humours and gratify the lusts of men, it is far, very far from being a token for good. A promise of bread in the morning is precious information; but the addition of flesh to the full, in the evening, wears rather the appearance of a threatening. When our desires exceed the bounds of wisdom, the accomplishment, not the disappointment of them, becomes our punishment.

It is remarkable too, that the luxurious part of their demand was granted, before that which was necessary. The quails came in the evening; the manna appeared not till the next morning. Another proof, that the supply granted flowed not from unmixed affection.

Without going, at present, into any of the critical inquiries, which have been pursued, respecting either the name, or the nature of this wonderful

bread, we proceed to make a few practical observations upon it, founded upon the letter of the history as it stands in our Bible.

First. Then, and then only, is faith warranted to expect relief from a miracle, when means have been tried without effect; or, when we are in such a situation that no means can be used with a probability of success. If God in his providence has brought us into the wilderness, where no corn can grow, where no water flows, we may reasonably look for an interposition from above for our support; which we should expect in vain in a land of corn and vineyards. Where there is a field for the exercise of foresight, industry, and diligence, we tempt God, instead of honouring him, when we cast our work, and not our care, upon him. And yet it is not uncommon to see a listless, indolent disposition, wanting to pass itself for reliance on the goodness of Heaven. Herod desired to see Christ, merely in the view of gratification to an idle curiosity, in hope of seeing a miracle performed: but his motive being wrong and unworthy, his desire was not indulged. The Pharisees, from a captious, unbelieving spirit, tempted Christ, "asking a sign from heaven;" but though signs innumerable were every day exhibited in compassion to the miserable, and in condescension to the weak, no sign but that "of the prophet "Jonas," was given to the self-conceited infidel. JEHOVAH performs the wonders of his power and goodness, neither to save the exertions of the lazy

nor to tickle the imaginations of the curious. His object is not to make men stare and wonder; but to do them good.

Secondly. Man's happiest estate is to feel his daily, constant dependance upon his Maker, and to see the regular promised supply, evincing the truth and faithfulness of its bountiful author. With a monitor for God pressing in upon us, through every avenue of the soul, we are nevertheless apt to be inattentive and unthankful. It is therefore an instance of great goodness, when God is pleased to force himself upon our thoughts; and to invite us to communion with "the Father of our spirits," in the commerce of a constant habitual friendship. Here then the poor have infinitely the advantage over the rich. They see, or they are blind indeed, they see their "dry morsel and their dinner of herbs," coming, at the expected hour, from the bounty of indulgent heaven. They are not suffered to be careless, impious, and ungrateful. Their homely fare is garnished and seasoned with what gold cannot purchase, nor power compel, the gentle whispers of a Father's love, the kindly welcome of an affectionate friend. And yet the bulk of mankind is striving and straining to get out of this happy state; cagerly catching at a situation, which would infallibly betray them into self-sufficiency, insolence, and irreligion. That proud word, independence, is continually in their mouths; and the thing itself is in their hearts; not considering, that the real happiness of man consists in mutual connexion and dependance; and that

the glory and felicity of every rational being is founded upon union with, and a sense of his constant and entire dependence on, his Creator.

Thirdly. No fulness and no excellency of created comforts will produce real happiness to rational beings, without the aid of religion. During the abode of Israel in Egypt, the observance of the sabbath had been greatly neglected, if not altogether disused. The religious principle of course must have been much weakened, if not wholly destroyed. There was nothing done, then, till this matter was re-established. For there can be no good government but what is founded upon religion; and religion cannot long exist in any degree of either fervour or purity, where no attention is paid to the Lord's day. Providence therefore employed a certain method, to point out that day to Israel, and to enforce the observance of it. On that day no manna fell. But, to compensate the failure, a double quantity was given the day before; and the manna of that day, contrary to its usual custom, retained its sweetness during the sabbath: it neither melted away nor became putrid. But alas! long disuse had so much diminished public respect for the ordinance, that a discipline of forty years is scarcely sufficient to restore it to its ancient dignity and estimation. The restraints of religion are no encroachments on human liberty. "The sabbath was made for man," a season of rest for his body; a season of contemplation for his mind. It was intended to be his comfort, as a citizen of this world;

and his condition as a candidate for another country, that is, an heavenly, is closely connected with it. Can the great God be honoured by our resting from the usual employments of life, for a seventh part of our time? Surely not: but God is honoured and glorified when man is made wise, good, and happy.

Fourthly. The folly and perverseness of men exhibit a melancholy contrast to the wisdom and goodness of God. The promise of the Almighty gave full assurance of a daily, certain, stated supply. But either through mistrust at one time, they attempt to hoard up to-morrow's provision from the superabundance of to-day: or through impiety at another, they violate the divine appointment, by going out to gather, on that day when they were expressly assured they needed to expect none. Thus we are always doing too little or too much; impatiently and impetuously outrunning Providence, or sluggishly and carelessly lagging behind. And what do we get to ourselves, in either case, but disappointment and dishonour? The man who diffidently laboured to accumulate, for five days of the week, when he looks upon his store, finds he has been treasuring up to himself nothing but stench and putrefaction; and the Israelite who presumptuously trusted his sabbath-day's entertainment to the manna of that day, must fast for his folly.

Fifthly. Observe the care of Providence to preserve among this highly-favoured people a constant sense of their equality. All had their constant supply; every one was entitled to his fair proportion;

and no good purpose did it answer to grasp at a double portion. For the hand which miraculously rained down this heavenly bread, miraculously modified it to every one's use. "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." Now, if we attend to the conduct of Providence, to this day, and in every state of the world, we shall find the same equality of distribution still going on. A man has just what he uses, and no more. With a chest full of gold, he has a desire to eat but twice or thrice a day at most. With a thousand suits of apparel in his wardrobe, he can use but one at a time. His neighbour, therefore, who has but one dinner, and one coat at once, is upon the whole just as rich as he. Beyond what nature requires, reason approves, and the Almighty crowns with his blessing, all is childish and fantastical. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." If this were felt and understood, as it ought, we should see less eagerness, rapacity, and selfishness, in one part of mankind; and less unthankfulness and discontent in another.

Sixthly. Mark the danger of giving way to a light, wanton, fanciful disposition. Even manna pleased not long. An imagination filled with the luxurious dainties of Egypt, soon spurned at it as "light bread." There is no end to wishing and desiring. Unadulterated nature craves but little, and is not difficult to please. But once give the reins to fancy,

and the wealth of Cræsus, the magnificence of Solomon, the elegance of Lucullus, and the luxury of Heliogabalus will soon stink and be despised. Men ate angels' food, and loathed it. Of what importance then must it be to check in ourselves, and to repress in those whose virtue and happiness are intrusted to our care, the first workings of a wild and fantastical appetite. Children cannot be too simply clothed and fed. Solicit the palate by delicacies, and you kindle a fire in the imagination, to which no wealth can administer a sufficient supply of fuel, which no reason can keep within bounds, which will certainly produce a thousand real evils, and render the possession of the real felicities of life tasteless and insipid. Teach young ones to value themselves on dress and appearance, and you undermine the fabric of their true consequence. In proportion as you lead them to derive their importance from the adorning of their bodies, you strip and expose their minds.

Seventhly. The same Power which corrupted the manna on the second day, and which preserved it from corruption every seventh day, commanded a small portion to be laid up, for a memorial to future generations; and for that purpose, miraculously kept it in its original state of sweetness and perfection. In this we see the absolute subjection of all things to the will of God, They grow and decay, they continue and pass away, they live and perish, just as he will. "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

“ And, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that
“ he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.
“ And though after my skin worms destroy this
“ body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” No
power nor skill can redeem the body from the power
of the grave; the arm of an archangel is unable to
confine it there.

Finally. The manna from heaven is likewise an
image of better things to come. The bread of angels
could not confer immortality on those who did eat
it: but “ the true bread which came down from
“ heaven,” communicates eternal life to all who par-
take of it. But the words of our Saviour himself
will best explain this subject. “ Jesus saith unto
“ them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh
“ to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on
“ me shall never thirst. Verily, verily, I say unto
“ you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.
“ I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat
“ manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is
“ the bread which cometh down from heaven, that
“ a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the
“ living bread which came down from heaven. If
“ any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever;
“ and the bread which I will give is my flesh, which
“ I will give for the life of the world. The Jews,
“ therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How
“ can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus
“ said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you,
“ except ye eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the
“ Son of Man, ye have no life in you. Whoso

“ eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath
“ eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last
“ day ; for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood
“ is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and
“ drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”
“ As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by
“ the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall
“ live by me. This is the bread which came down
“ from heaven, not as your fathers did eat manna,
“ and are dead. He that eateth of this bread shall
“ live for ever.”

Having thus finished the course of lectures proposed for this season [A], what remains, but that with a grateful heart I first acknowledge the great goodness of Almighty God, who has graciously lent health and strength for carrying on this undertaking thus far. If any savour of divine things has been felt or communicated ; if Scripture truth has, to any, been set in a new or an agreeable light ; if a taste for sacred reading and meditation has been conveyed ; if the connexion between the Old and New Testament has been pointed out, and impressed upon any heart ; and, if the young, in particular, have been induced, by any thing said in this place, to think for themselves, and to compare spiritual things with spiritual ;—the lecturer has gained his end, and is already in possession of his reward. The praise he cheerfully renders to Him to whom it belongs.

To you, my very dear friends, my thanks are, in the next place, unquestionably due, and are rendered with unfeigned gratitude. Your patient attendance

and candid attention, during seven months together, I shall ever consider as a proof of attachment the most flattering, and the most encouraging. Why should I conceal my feelings on the occasion? I engaged in this undertaking, at first, with fear and trembling; I proceeded with solicitude; but I conclude with heart-felt satisfaction; because the countenance I have met with encourages me to hope, that my labours may have been doing some good. If there be one circumstance which gives me pain, it is the excess of that liberality and approbation which has so far over-rated and over-paid my endeavours, to convey to you useful and pleasing instruction. In return, all I can do is to wish and pray that your kindness may be returned a thousand fold into your bosoms, in temporal, spiritual, and heavenly blessings. And now, my beloved brethren, farewell. To the grace of God I commend you all: even, “to him that is able to keep you from falling, “and to present you faultless before the presence of “his glory with exceeding joy; even to the only “wise God our Saviour.” That we shall never all meet again, in an earthly temple, is certain. For time is hastening to silence the tongue of the preacher, and to close the hearer’s ear. But we have everlasting consolation and good hope, through grace, of meeting together, and of worshipping, in that temple “which has no need of the sun, neither of “the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth “lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And “the nations of them which are saved shall walk

“ in the light of it : and the kings of the earth do
“ bring their glory and honour into it. And the
“ gates of it shall not be shut at all by day ; for
“ there shall be no night there.” Let us, therefore,
“ be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the
“ work of the Lord ; forasmuch as we know that
“ our labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

[A] For the reason assigned, when these discourses were first submitted to the public eye, some of the occasional addresses from the pulpit were retained in the publication. But the lectures of a season not corresponding exactly to the usual size of a volume, it became at length a matter of doubt, whether these addresses should be altogether suppressed, modelled into a more proper diction and station for the press, or given exactly in the order and words in which they were delivered. The doubt issued, in resolving upon the last. This lecture concluded the course of the Spring, 1783. The course of the ensuing season commenced with that which follows. Perhaps it was unnecessary to say so much, in explanation of a matter so little important, as the conclusion of one discourse, and the introduction to another.

LECTURE XXIII.

EXODUS XVII. 1, 2, 5, 6.

And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim : and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water, that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel: and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

THE reconciliation of interrupted friendship is one of the chief delights of human life. The ecstatic pleasure of meeting again, after long absence, persons whom we dearly love, obliterates in a moment the pain of separation; and one hour of sweet communication compensates the languor, solicitude, and gloom of many years. After an interval of five months, I return to converse with Moses, and to talk of him to you, with the satisfaction of one who has been upon a long journey, and, returning home,

finds again those whom he left, those whom he loves ; and finds them such as he wishes them to be. Let us, my dear friends, with increased ardour, affection, admiration, and gratitude, renew our intimacy with the venerable man to whom we are indebted for so much rational pleasure, and for so much useful instruction. Moses, thou prince of historians, sublimest of poets, sagest of legislators, clearest-sighted of prophets, most amiable of men ! To thee we owe our knowledge of the ages beyond the flood ! Thou first taughtest to string the sacred lyre, and to adapt the high praises of God to the enchanting concord of sweet sounds. By thee, King in Jeshurun, all succeeding princes have been instructed how to govern, and by thee lawgivers are formed to political wisdom and sagacity. By thee, Jews were led to expect, and Gentiles are encouraged to rejoice in, MESSIAH, the Great Prophet, after thy similitude ; by whom alone thou art excelled. And by thee, mildest, meekest, gentlest of mankind, the endearing charities of private life are most engagingly exemplified, and most powerfully recommended.

But chiefly, thee, O Spirit ! thee only, we adore,

“ Who didst inspire
“ That Shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,
“ In the beginning, how the heavens and earth
“ Rose out of chaos.”

Whatever wisdom we may have learned, whatever pleasure we may have enjoyed, whatever comfort we

possess, whatever hope we feel—all, all is of Thee, pure, eternal, unchanging Source of light, and life, and joy.

Moses, in the passage of his writings which I have now read, is carrying on his own interesting, eventful history. At the head of the myriads of Israel he is now pursuing his march from Egypt to Canaan, following a guide who would not mislead them, and whom they could not mistake; protected by a power which, like a wall of fire, bid defiance to every threatening foe; and, from day to day, supplied by a bounty incapable of being exhausted. All these present and singular advantages had the sweetness of hope mingled with them. They had just escaped from the most humiliating and oppressive of all servitude, and they were hastening to the inheritance of their fathers; yet we find them a people as peevish, irritable, and difficult to please, as if they had never known adversity, and as if they had just issued from the lap of ease and indulgence. To-day, the bread is dry and stale; to-morrow, the water is bitter; the third day, there is a scarcity of it. The water is sweetened; manna descends; quails fall around their camp; but there is still “a cruel something unpossessed,” and all that went before is forgotten; all that is in possession becomes insipid. Bestow on the ungrateful person nine hundred and ninety nine favours, and withhold the thousandth, and all you have done for him is lost. The present pressure always seems the heaviest. Mouldy bread and brackish water in the wilderness, are considered

as evils more intolerable than all the rigours of slavery in Egypt.

Where does this censure fall? On that moody, murmuring race the Jews, and on them only? Alas! it overwhelms ourselves; it bears hard not upon individuals here and there, but upon mankind! We expect more from the world than it possibly can bestow; and when we discover its insufficiency, we charge God foolishly, and because we have not every thing that we wish, we are satisfied with nothing. Solacing ourselves like Jonah, under the shadow of a gourd, we fancy it is a perennial shelter. We see not the worm which is gnawing its root; and when it is smitten down and withers, we are ready to say with the sullen, testy prophet, "We do well to be angry."

But, was the want of water a slight evil? And, is it sinful to complain under the pressure of a calamity like this? And, was this the *first* time Israel had been in distress, and found relief? Who was it that sweetened the waters of Marah? Who divided the Red Sea? Who rained bread from heaven? And, Who ever mended his condition by murmuring and discontent? Had God intended to destroy that people, why all this exertion of a strong hand and stretched-out arm to deliver them? God, in the failure of our earthly comforts, intends not our mortification and ruin, but our wisdom and improvement. He thereby teaches us our dependance; it summons us to the observation of his providence; and levels

not the hope and joy, but the pride and self-sufficiency of man.

Water! Precious fluid! Infinitely more valuable than the blood of the grape, than rivulets of oil, or honey from the rock; refreshed, sustained every moment by thee—we are every moment wasting, neglecting, forgetting thee. We prize thee not, because of thy rich abundance; and, because thou enterest into every other mean of food and comfort, thy importance is unobserved, thy benefits forgotten. May I never know thy value from the want of thee.

“There was no water for the people to drink. “Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and “said, Give us water that we may drink. And “Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? “Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?” If, in their calmest moments, men are often incapable of reasoning justly, and of distinguishing accurately, is it any wonder to find them, in the very tide and whirlwind of passion, acting foolishly and unreasonably? Who would envy pre-eminence such as that which Moses enjoyed? Is glory obtained? He comes in but for a moderate share. Is blame incurred, or distress felt? All is imputed to him. To what a severe trial was the temper of this meekest of all men now put? What so provoking as to meet with censure, when we are conscious of meriting praise! What so galling as to have the calamities of others charged upon us as crimes; to be accused as culpable merely because we have been unfortunate? Surely

the great are set in slippery places ; and “ uneasy
“ must the head lie that wears a crown.”

We see Moses flying, in the hour of danger, whither the people ought to have fled in the hour of their affliction. “ He cried unto the Lord.” Religion opens a refuge, when every other refuge fails ; and it administers a remedy to ills otherwise incurable. I tremble for the life of Moses. He trembles for himself : “ They are almost ready to stone me.” The voice of Jehovah is again heard, and Moses is in safety. But I tremble now, for those murmuring, unbelieving, rebellious Israelites. Is not the thunder of His indignation going to burst out ? Is not the fire hastening to consume ? Or is the earth going to open her mouth, and swallow them quick up into the pit ? Behold a solemn preparation is making ? But it is an arrangement of love. It is the voice of God we hear :—but it speaks mercy and peace. The tremendous rod of God, wherewith he bruised and broke Egypt, is again employed ; but not as the instrument of punishment to Israel. It smites, not a sinful people, but the flinty rock ; and it draws forth, not a stream of blood from the heart of the offender, but a stream of water to cool his tongue, and to restore his fainting soul. Surely, O Lord, “ thy ways are not as our ways : for as the
“ heavens are higher than the earth, so are thy ways
“ higher than our ways, and thy thoughts than
“ our thoughts.” “ Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God ; on them which fell,
“ severity ; but toward thee, goodness, if thou con-

“tinue in his goodness; otherwise, thou also shalt “be cut off.” Astonishing instance of the power and sovereignty of the Most High! The same rod which smote the river, and it became blood, smites the rock, and it becomes streams of water. Who is to be feared, who is to be trusted, but the God who can do these great things?

How honourable had it been for Israel to have had this stage of their marching through the wilderness distinguished by a name which betokened and commemorated their faithfulness, obedience, and submission. Instead of this, the names *Massah* and *Meribah* must transmit to all generations the memory of *temptation*, *chiding*, and *strife*. Happily, the monuments of human frailty, folly, and guilt, are also the monuments of the divine patience, forbearance, and tender mercy. “But the law had only “a shadow of good things to come.” Where Moses leaves us, Isaiah takes us by the hand and leads us on our way; pointing to Him whom all prophecy revealed, and saying, “Behold, a King shall reign “in righteousness; and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place “from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; “as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow “of a great rock in a weary land.” And the apostle of the Gentiles conducts our weary wandering steps from the rock in Horeb to the rock Christ, from whence issues the mighty “river, which makes “glad the city of our God;” and which affords, not a transitory and temporary refreshment, but a

perpetual never-failing supply. “ Moreover, brethren,
“ I would not that ye should be ignorant; how that
“ all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed
“ through the sea; and were all baptised unto Mo-
“ ses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did all eat
“ the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same
“ spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual
“ rock which followed them; and that rock was
“ Christ.” The words of the apostle insinuate, that
the stream, which issued from the rock in the wil-
derness, continued to flow, and accompanied their
progress through the desert, during the remainder
of their long pilgrimage; till, being arrived at the
Land of Promise, a land watered with the dew of
heaven, and the abundance of the rivers, a mira-
culous supply being unnecessary, was withdrawn.

Thus was the Gospel preached to them of old time.
The solid rock became as it were moveable; “ and
“ followed them,” whithersoever they went. The
adamant was melted into a pool for their refreshment.
Blessed type of Him who, in his own person, ac-
commodated the immutability of the divine nature to
the necessities, and to the relief of human misery!
Blessed type of that stream of blood, flowing from
the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;
and “ which taketh away the sins of the world!”
Blessed type of that “ consolation that is in Christ
“ Jesus,” for the weary and heavy laden, for the
guilty and the wretched, for the faint and dying!
Blessed type of that precious stream which has
flowed in every age, and is flowing to every nation

in general, and no slender proof of the credibility of the Scripture history.

Secondly, Remark the mixture of frailty and imperfection which enters into every human character. Moses himself is not faultless. And, what is more observable still, he fails on the side of his greatest excellency; he is found weak there where he seemed most strong. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Nevertheless, what saith the history? He loses temper, and speaks unadvisedly with his lips; "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" He takes glory to himself, instead of ascribing it to God: "Must we fetch you water?" He presumptuously exceeds his commission. He lifts up his hand and *smites* the rock *twice* with his *rod*, whereas he was commanded only to *speak* unto it before the eyes of the people.

Seems it not as if God intended to write vanity and shame on all the glory of man, "that no flesh should glory in his presence?" by showing us faithful Abraham mistrusting his God, and seeking refuge in falsehood: the patient Job growing peevish, and "cursing his day:" the affectionate and zealous Peter basely denying his master; and the meek and gentle Moses waxing warm; and, in his haste, speaking disrespectfully of God, and unkindly of men. "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall." "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for

“ out of it are the issues of life.” “ Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips.”

Observe, thirdly, The delicacy and the danger of assuming a latitude and a liberty in sacred things. In what concerns the conduct of human life, and our intercourse one with another, as the citizens of this world, many things must be left to be governed by occasion and discretion ; but in what relates to the immediate worship of God, and where the mind of the Lord has been clearly made known, to assume and exercise a dispensing power is criminal and hazardous. The tabernacle must be constructed, to the minutest pin and loop, according to the pattern delivered in the mount. If Uzzah presumes to put forth his hand to support the tottering ark, it is at his peril. A holy and a jealous God will be served only by the persons, and in the manner, which he himself has appointed ; and the intruder into sacred offices and employments is ready to be broken in upon, in hot displeasure. Has God said, “ *Speak* to the rock.” Who has the boldness to *strike* it? Moses dares to do it ; and his rashness forfeits his title to a part and lot in the promised inheritance. Into Canaan he shall never enter, but only see it at a distance with his eyes. The offending, chiding, murmuring congregation is pitied, forgiven, and relieved. The offending, hasty, presumptuous prophet is punished. “ Our God is “ a consuming fire.” “ It is a fearful thing to fall “ into the hands of the living God. Who can un-

“derstand his errors ? Cleanse thou me from secret
“faults. Keep back thy servant also from pre-
“sumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over
“me ; then shall I be upright, and I shall be inno-
“cent from the great transgression.”

Remark, in the fourth place, The rashness and folly of man shall not, cannot render the purpose of God of none effect. A whole people shall not be permitted to perish for thirst, because the prescribed mode of relief has not been exactly followed. Though the rock be stricken, instead of being spoken unto, it shall not fail to yield the promised fountain of water. Moses is frail, but God is good. There has prevailed, since the beginning, a strange contention between the folly and perverseness of the fallen apostate creature, and the wisdom and goodness of the Gracious Creator. And glory be to God, our evil is overcome of his good. And when all struggle and opposition are at an end, when the will of God shall finally prevail, “and every high
“thought shall be brought into captivity to the
“will of Christ,” it shall then be found, that “the
“wrath of man” has all along been “working the
“righteousness of God ;” that the elementary strife which was permitted to take place in the natural world ; the jarring, discordant passions which seemed to convulse and disturb the moral government of God, and even the infernal devices of the powers of darkness, were all without their design, nay, contrary to their intention, carrying on the great plans of the Divine Providence to their con-

summation. Glorious, transporting thought! I will henceforth command my troubled soul into peace. I will calmly wait the issue; and leave it to the great God, in his own time and way, to explain the reasons of his conduct, and fully vindicate his ways to men. The troubles which I see, the troubles which I feel, the troubles which I fear, though they may come nigh, shall not overwhelm my soul; "I shall not be afraid when I hear of evil tidings: my heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." "We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory."

Fifthly, When we behold a holy and righteous God thus severely punishing what may be deemed by some a slight offence, in one of the dearest and best of his children, let none dare to trifle with his justice. If Moses, in one rash moment, by one unadvised step, incurred a displeasure which he could never remove, and forfeited an inheritance which he never was able to recover—What hast thou, O man, to expect, whose whole life has been an accumulation of offence, has been the addition only of sinfulness to weakness, and of presumption to folly? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear." Take care how you estimate the malignity, guilt, and danger of sin, by the erroneous and fluctuating

standard of your own weak understanding, or still weaker passions. Not according to these, nor the maxims of the world, nor the prejudices of a misguided spirit, but by a steadier rule, by an unchanging law, thou shalt be judged, and finally justified or condemned. If Moses lost an inheritance in an earthly Canaan, for neglecting to give glory to God in one instance, tremble to think of being eternally excluded from "the inheritance of the saints in light," for ten thousand offences of the same nature. Beware of reckoning any transgression small, any sin venial, any temptation contemptible. Behold the mighty fallen, and be humble.

It is truly affecting to find Moses, in the sequel, earnestly entreating a remission of the sentence, but entreating in vain. And, when unable by supplication to prevail, submissively resigning himself to the will of God. But the world has seen a still more awful demonstration of God's displeasure at sin. When the Lord laid upon the head of the great atonement, "the iniquity of us all, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief." "God spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all." Is it possible to conceive a motive so cogent to abstain from evil, and even from the appearance of it; and to loathe, and put off from us, the garment spotted with the flesh?

But again, one offence, though it may provoke the anger, and call down the chastisement of a holy God, breaks not off all intercourse, and for ever, between Him and a good man. With the firmness

of a wise and just Father he denounces the punishment, and inflicts it. With the tenderness and love of a gracious and relenting Parent, he carries on the correspondence; and even admits the offending child to closer intimacy, and to familiarity more endearing. For the great God is not like them who mar and embitter their pardon with hard conditions, cruel upbraidings, and mortifying recollections; and who plainly show, that though they may be capable of forgiving, they know not what it is to bury injuries in everlasting forgetfulness. The conduct of Moses too, under the weight of this awful displeasure, is amiable and instructive. He mutters not, with sullen Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" he sinks not into dejection; he replies not in resentment. While he deprecates the penalty, he attempts not to extenuate the guilt of his crime; and though well assured he is not to have the honour of conducting Israel into Canaan, nor the happiness of enjoying a personal possession in that promised inheritance, yet he withdraws himself from no particular of duty, relaxes not his diligence, cools not in his zeal; he labours to the last, does what he can, though he be not permitted to do what he would; he goes before Israel to the Land of Promise, though access into it was denied him. This, as much as anything in his history, marks his character, and evinces the greatness of his soul. And this teaches a lesson of no mean importance, in

friendship among men, namely, to cultivate with diligence and assiduity the charities which we have in common; and to suffer those things to rest and sleep, which, if stirred and awakened, are likely to disturb and separate us.

It is not the design of Providence, that we should think exactly the same way on all points. But shall I agree with my brother in nothing, because we happen to differ in one thing?

I detain you till I have made only one remark more upon the whole history. The distress of the cattle, for want of water, is mentioned as a circumstance of importance both in the books of Exodus and Numbers; and, it is especially attended to, in the miraculous relief which Heaven provided. Is the great God degraded, when he is represented as "caring for oxen, and feeding the ravens, and "hearing the young lions when they cry?" No, no; these minuter views of his providential care and kindness endear him but the more to the understanding that discerns, and the heart that feels. I know not a more tender stroke of the pathetic eloquence, than that which we have in the prophecy of Jonah, when God extended mercy, in a manner peculiar to himself, to Nineveh, that great and sinful city. "Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity
"on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured;
"neither madest it grow, which came up in a night,
"and perished in a night: and should I not spare
"Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than

“ three-score thousand persons that cannot discern
“ between their right hand and their left hand,—
“ and also much cattle?”

One stage more will bring us, with Israel, to the foot of Sinai, to observe and to improve one of the most notable dispensations of Providence upon record ; “ The giving of the Law.” But here let us pause, with devout acknowledgment of that bountiful hand, which fed the seed of Abraham, immediately from the clouds, for forty years together ; and which feeds us, through rather a longer process, by blending and compounding the qualities and influences of earth, air, fire, and water. While we adore the providential care which refreshed Israel by streams from the rock, let us rejoice together, that it refreshes us, by keeping our rivers ever flowing, our fountains constantly supplied, and the clouds of our atmosphere, in their season, always impregnated with the rain and the dew. “ With the “ bread that perisheth,” Gracious God ! grant us that “ which endureth to life everlasting.” Amen.

LECTURE XXIV.

EXODUS XVII. 8—13.

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

NOTHING can be more afflicting to a humane and serious mind, than to reflect on that strife and contention which have, in every age, deluged the world with human blood. Who could believe, if all history did not prove it, and who can think of it without horror, that men should be continually lying in wait, like beasts of prey, to catch and devour men: that the strong, the cunning, and the fierce, should be for ever on the watch to take advantage of the weak, the simple, and the gentle? And must it be? Father of mercies! must it needs be, that war should continue to waste the nations? Shall the earth be for ever a field of blood? Must

the peace of private families, and the repose of kingdoms, be eternally disturbed by lust and pride, avarice and ambition, envy and revenge? Blessed God! send forth the spirit of thy Son into the hearts of men. Prince of Peace! command this troubled ocean into a calm. Spirit of Love! put a full end to bitterness and wrath. Subdue this carnal mind, which is enmity against God. Glorious Gospel of Salvation! as thou bringest good will from God to men, restore good-will to men among themselves.

It is difficult to say whether men suffer most from their own folly, or from the cruelty and injustice of others. We generally find, that when evil from without would, for a while, permit wretched mortals to breathe and be at peace, they perversely become self-tormentors, and ingeniously contrive sources of vexation to themselves. And, which is the greater evil of the two? That, undoubtedly, of which we are the authors to ourselves. We have then to encounter an enemy from whom we cannot hope to escape, and whom we are unable to overcome. From a conflict with Amalek, Israel comes off with both credit and comfort; but a strife of discontent, impatience, and rebellion against God must of necessity issue in shame and loss.

God, rich in mercy, slow to anger, and of great kindness, has graciously forgiven the murmuring at Horeb, and has extracted water from the rock for the relief of his people. But this woe is no sooner

past than another overtakes them. "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." The transaction recorded here, so simply and uncircumstantially, is mentioned again in Deuteronomy with many circumstances of aggravation, which greatly increase our detestation of this conduct in Amalek, and explain the deep resentment which a holy and righteous God himself expresses upon the occasion, and which, by a positive statute, he transmits to Israel. "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it."

Amalek, the father of this nation, as we learn from Genesis xxxvi. 12, was grandson to Esau, and son to Eliphaz, by a concubine named Timna. The Amalekites indeed are mentioned much earlier in Scripture; even in the days of Abraham, when Chederlaomer is represented, with his victorious army, as ravaging all their country. But it is well known, that the sacred writers, when treating of various periods, give appellations to regions and countries, which did not belong to

them till ages afterwards, but by which they were better known, at the time when the historian wrote. They possessed a large tract of country, extending from the confines of Idumea to the eastern shore of the Red Sea; and from their neighbourhood to, and commerce with Phœnicia, they are by some called Phœnicians.

Immediately on their passing through the Red Sea, it behoved the children of Israel to enter into this territory, on their way to Canaan. And probably the paternal relation which subsisted between them and Amalek, encouraged the posterity of Jacob to advance on their way with greater confidence. "It is the land of our brethren through which we are to pass;" would they say, one to another. "The heart of Esau himself relented, when he saw his brother Jacob return, encumbered with a train of women, and children, and cattle. He forgot his resentments; he became the protector of the man whom he had, in the hour of passion, vowed to destroy. The injury done him in the matter of the birthright, and of the blessing, he generously forgave. Surely the posterity of Esau, after many generations, will not revive a quarrel which is extinguished and forgotten, first in the reconciliation, and then in the death of the original parties to it. After a servitude so long and so bitter, in Egypt, we shall at length find a time and a place to breathe; and the soothing of fraternal love shall console us for the rigours of oppression."

Vain expectation ! What foe so dreadful as a brother disaffected ! Egypt smote with the rod ; Amalek smites with the sword ; he basely, cruelly seizes the moment of Israel's languor, weakness, and dejection, and attempts to crush those whom a sanguinary tyrant had persecuted, and whom Heaven itself had bruised. The cowardice of this behaviour is equal to the unkindness of it. Had they boldly appeared at the first, to dispute the passage of the Red Sea, and to repel by force of arms the invasion of their country, their conduct, though ungenerous and unkind, had been ingenuous and manly. But either through fear or policy, they permit Israel to advance, they watch the moment of their difficulty and distress, and, like dastards, steal upon the rear of an army whose front they dared not to oppose.

Neither good qualities nor bad are found single in the human breast. And in the nation whose character is now the object of our censure, we find a combination of the worst qualities of which our nature is capable, all originating in the deficiency of one great principle, which is at the root of all the evil that men commit, " he feared not God." Why did Amalek rake up the ashes of an ancient grudge ? " He feared not God." Why did he join to afflict the miserable, and to overwhelm the oppressed ? " He feared not God." Why did he meanly attack the weak and more vulnerable part of his adversary, in the hope of safety and impunity ? " He feared not God." Wherefore, in ge-

neral, are men subtle, revengeful, cunning, and selfish? They "fear not God;" they "harden themselves against him;" and yet think "to prosper." They "love not their brother whom they have seen," because they are wilfully ignorant of, or hate God, "whom they have not seen."

Such is the union which Providence has established between all the parts of the natural and of the political body, that the weakness or distress of one member is the infirmity and suffering of the whole. The hindmost and the feeble of Israel are smitten; the foremost and the strong feel, and immediately resent it. "And Moses said unto Joshua, 'Choose out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in mine hand.'" We have here a combination, which ought never to be separated, and in which safety and success are ever to be found, namely, the acknowledgment of Heaven and the use of appointed means; the sword in the hand of Joshua, the rod in that of Moses; the embattled host below in the valley, the intercessor with God "wrestling" and "making supplication" upon the hill. In vain had Moses prayed if Joshua had not fought. Destitute of "the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man," the skill and courage of the warrior had failed before the enemy. The rod of God! In how many different services is it employed! How many various purposes does it answer! It smites the river of Egypt, and it

becomes blood. It smites the rock of Horeb, and it sends forth a stream of water. It is extended towards heaven on the top of the hill, and Amalek is destroyed. Striking and instructive type of that "Rod of God's mouth" wherewith "he slays the wicked:" of that sword of the Spirit, "which is the word of God: of that hammer, which breaketh the rock in pieces:" of that gospel, which is "a savour of God in them that believe, and in them that perish."

Observe how God appoints to every man his station of usefulness and of importance. It was not for want either of zeal or of courage, that Moses takes his post, at a distance, on the hill. It is not for want of piety, that Joshua leads on the armies of Israel, on the plain. The mistakes and miscarriages of the world arise from the weakness and wickedness of men; at one time over-rating their talents, and thrusting themselves forward into situations for which they are wholly unfit; and at another, through timidity, shrinking from the duties of that station which Providence has assigned them; and at a third, treacherously, through some bias of private interest, passion, or party, selling the trust committed to them to the foe. Happily, in the case before us, the head which directed and the hand which executed were in perfect unison. The spirit that fought, and the spirit that prayed were one.

Let us, first, ascend the hill with Moses and his two friends; and adopt the feelings of men who at

once feel for the public cause, were not without well founded apprehensions from the common enemy, and at the same time feared and trusted the Lord. Moses has given his orders to Joshua, and he has so far done well ; but to stop there had been doing nothing. He has set the means to work, and now he can confidently look up to Heaven for that blessing which can give success to the means. He ascends to meet God, but ascends not alone. As wickedness seeks to fortify, and to keep itself in countenance, by the society of the wicked, so the fire of devotion keeps itself alive by the sacred communication of a kindred flame. The hands of Moses alone had soon become feeble, and must have dropped down, and Amalek must finally have prevailed ; supported by Aaron and Hur, they continue “ steady, till the going down of the sun ;” and Amalek and his people are discomfited with the edge of the sword.

Of Aaron, one of the companions of Moses upon the mount, we know much ; of Hur, the other, the Scripture account is more sparing. Those who are never at a loss, so long as fancy and invention can create, make him the son of Caleb, and the husband of Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. It appears from the history that he was the father of Uri ; and the grandfather of Bezaleel, the famous artist employed, by special endowment and appointment of Heaven, for the construction of the more curious and costly furniture of the tabernacle and sanctuary. But it is of more importance for us

to know him, and for him to be reported, as a person of the first quality ; and his quality supported by that which gives rank its highest lustre, genuine piety. Moses left him, in commission with Aaron, to judge the people, when a short while after this he went up alone into mount Sinai to meet God. This is argument sufficient of his high rank ; and the assumption of him, to assist devotion in mount Horeb, while Israel was engaged with Amalek, is a proof equally clear and decisive of his extraordinary piety.

Behold then the man of God, supported and encouraged by two such companions, discovering all the honest anxiety of the patriot, together with all the confidence and fervour of the saint ; with his eyes eagerly bent on the conflicting armies in the plain below ; and his hands, with his heart, lifted up to God in the heavens, from whom his help came. It was clearly the intention of Providence, that the deliverance which should be wrought for Israel on this occasion, though not wholly independent on the use of means, should evidently appear to flow chiefly, and only, from the interposition and grace of Heaven. " It came to pass, " when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed ; and when he let down his hand, that Amalek prevailed."

This is the first battle which Israel was called to fight ; and it was designed to be a model of all that should follow ; of assured success to them, and victory over all their enemies, provided they con-

stantly acknowledged God, with hands continually lifted up to heaven. And it had undoubtedly a farther view, namely, to represent, in general, the powerful and certain effect of prayer to God, and of a sense of dependence upon him; to show that our strength is in exact proportion to the perception of our own weakness, and to our confidence in Almighty grace. The lesson inculcated in this history is the same which Christ taught his disciples in the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow, "That men ought always to pray, and not "to faint." If importunity and the love of ~~ease~~ have power to constrain a man to do his duty, though he have no inclination to it, how much more certain the effect of earnestness and importunity with the Hearer of Prayer, the Father of Mercies; who is ever more ready to grant than man to ask? "If ye "then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto "your children, how much more shall your Father "which is in Heaven give good things to them "that ask him."

Have you considered then, my Christian friend, what a powerful instrument is put into your hand, mighty as the rod of God in the hand of Moses, wherewith he did wonders? "Elias was a man "subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed "earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained "not on the earth for the space of three years and "six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her "fruit." Surely then, "the effectual fervent prayer

“of a righteous man availeth much.” God has not given you assurance of success in all your undertakings, but he has bestowed upon you the privilege, and promised you the spirit of prayer, by which you shall certainly obtain one of two things; either that blessing from above, upon your honest endeavours, which maketh rich, which ensures success, and makes it durable; or that resignation of spirit, and submission to the will of God, which subdue misfortune, and which turn calamity and disappointment themselves into advantage. God has not given thee, my friend, the promise of riches; but he has given thee, what is much better, the spirit of grace and supplication, to form thy soul to contentment. You have no security against pain and sorrow; but you have that which produces patience and fortitude. You cannot promise yourself long life: but habitual intercourse with God, by prayer, overcomes the fear of death.

Glorious privilege! Whatever my situation in life be, here is something to improve it, if good; something to mend it, if evil. Here is the ornament and essence of prosperity; the cure and cordial of adversity. Here is the guardian and the guide of life; the sweetener and subduer of death. Prayer brings all the glorious perfections of Deity into our possession. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” “When I am weak, then am I strong;” “for, I can do all things through Christ which strength-

"eneth me." Is the thorn not removed, the messenger of Satan not rebuked, though the Lord be thrice besought, that they may depart? No matter. Is it not said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness? Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

But where are the hands which never hang down? Those of Moses himself became heavy. "The spirit indeed is willing; but the flesh is weak." Fatal omen to Israel! Amalek instantly gains the ascendant. But happily Moses was not alone in the mount: "And they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend;" and so devotion kindles and keeps alive devotion. Secret prayer, like the melody of one sweet-toned voice, stealing upon the ear, gently wafts the soul to Heaven: social worship, as a full chorus of harmonized sounds, pierces the sky, and raises a great multitude of kindred spirits to the bright regions of everlasting love, and places them together before the throne of God. How happy are Aaron and Hur in lending this aid to the wearied hands of Moses, and to the declining interest of the Israel of God! How happy is Moses in being thus sup-

ported! But there is an Intercessor whose hands never hang down, whose fervour never cools, whose mediation never fails, whose attention is never relaxed. "We have an advocate with the Father, "Jesus Christ, the righteous." Him, the Father "heareth always:" "as a Prince, he hath power, "and prevaieth."

Let us now turn our eyes to the struggle in the valley below. There we meet "the confused noise "of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood:" the alternate shouts of acclamation and triumph, mingling with the piercing shrieks of the wounded and the groans of the dying. Israel, now hurrying on to victory; and anon flying before the insulting foe. The event, for a while, is awfully in doubt; turning upon the strength and feebleness, not of thousands, but of one single arm; decided at length, not by the edge of the sword, but the elevation or depression of a rod; and that rod swayed, not by the skill and prowess of Joshua, but the firmness and devotion of Moses.

But now doubt and anxiety are at an end. The hands of Moses are propped up, and Israel finally prevails. And what heart, but that of an Amalek, must rejoice in the issue? "The cunning is taken "in his own craftiness." A design of violence and blood falls upon the head of him that contrived it. The righteous and innocent cause bears down pride and cruelty. We behold the destination of Heaven standing good; the birthright sold away, the blessing anticipated; the elder made subject to the

younger. "God is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?"

Israel has conquered. But it is impossible to mistake the means by which he has gotten the victory. "The hand of the Lord, and his holy arm, they have gotten him the victory." The altar therefore, which was built to celebrate this signal success, shall, by its name, perpetuate the remembrance of God the deliverer. Jehovah-Nissi, "the Lord my banner," was inscribed upon it by the divine appointment; and a reason is assigned in the sixteenth verse. "For he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

These words, having been variously rendered, have given occasion to various opinions among interpreters. Some read the passage thus, "Because the hand of Amalek is against the throne of the Lord, the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." This reading resolves the guilt of Amalek, not into an insidious and cruel design against Israel, but into a rash and impious attempt to defeat the plan of Providence, which was to bring Israel into the quiet possession of Canaan, and to exalt that nation favoured of God, but envied of man, to wealth, power, and empire. God, therefore, was pleased to vindicate in person the cause which was his own, and to write disappointment, and a curse, upon every plan which

Amalek could form, of greatness and prosperity. So "fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of "the living God," so dangerous to form a combination "against the Lord, and against his anointed, "saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast "away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the "heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in "derision."

Others literally translate the words thus, "With "the hand upon the throne of the Lord, *He* hath "sworn that he will have war with Amalek from "generation to generation." *He*, that is, Moses hath sworn, with the most awful solemnities, and recorded the oath in a book, for perpetual preservation, that there shall be no peace between Israel and Amalek till he be utterly destroyed. The hand which was extended towards heaven, the throne of the great and terrible God, with the rod in it ; the instrument of a victory which was interrupted by the going down of the sun, has been lifted up, to "swear by Him that liveth for ever," that the triumph of that day shall be followed up, till the hated name of Amalek be extinguished from under heaven.

Some make Jehovah himself to be the person who binds himself by this solemn oath. "*The* "hand," that is, Jehovah's own hand, upon the throne of the Lord. "Because he could swear by "no greater, he hath sworn by himself, that *He* "will have war with Amalek from generation to "generation." We have a prophecy in the mouth

of Balaam, to the same effect, "And when he
"looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and
"said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his
"latter end shall be that he perish for ever."

The execution of this dreadful sentence was reserved to the days of Samuel, four hundred and twelve years after; and it was committed to Saul who, through an impolitic and sinful lenity, failed to fulfil the design of Providence, and thereby incurred the displeasure of Heaven, and forfeited his life and crown by his disobedience. I transcribe the passage.

"Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me
"to anoint thee to be king over his people, over
"Israel; now therefore hearken thou unto the
"voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the
"Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek
"did to Israel; how he laid wait for him in the
"way when he came up from Egypt. Now go,
"and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that
"they have, and spare them not; but slay both
"man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and
"sheep, camel and ass." This order Saul obeyed
but in part. He assumed and exercised a dispensing power, and it became a snare to him. He took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive; and reserved the best of the spoil. The Prophet is sent of God to reprove his disobedience, which Saul attempting to palliate, brings down this censure upon his head:
"When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast

“thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and
“the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the
“Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and
“utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and
“fight against them until they be consumed.
“Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of
“the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst
“evil in the sight of the Lord. And Samuel said,
“Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings
“and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the
“Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice;
“and to hearken, than the fat of rams. For re-
“bellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubborn-
“ness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou
“hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also
“rejected thee from being king.” Has God com-
manded to destroy? Who shall presume to save?
Has he commanded to spare? Who dares destroy?
“I say unto you, Be not afraid of them that kill
“the body, and after that have no more that they
“can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall
“fear: fear Him, which, after he hath killed, hath
“power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you fear
“Him.”

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LECTURE XXV.

EXODUS XVIII. 7—12.

And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them. And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

THE great Author and Ruler of the world has evidently in view the pleasure and happiness, as well as the wisdom and virtue of his rational creatures. We find, through the widely expanded frame of nature, and the extensive plan of Providence, as many sources of joy as there are means of improvement. What an infinite, beautiful, and pleasing variety, in the works, and in the ways of God! all ministering to human comfort, all aiming at making

men good. The mind of man is formed to desire and to relish variety. The objects with which he is conversant are therefore varied without end, in order to gratify that desire, and to correspond with that relish. The glare of perpetual sunshine, and the fervid heat of an eternal summer, would speedily oppress and destroy mankind: but, relieved by the tranquillity of Darkness, the freshness of Spring, the sedateness of Autumn, and even the gloom of Winter, they become no less grateful than they are beneficial. In surveying the globe, the eye is not permitted to tire by having to crawl along a boundless plain; but it sparkles with delight, as it springs from valley to valley, and from hill to hill. And even the glories of the starry heavens are rendered still more glorious, by being kept in continual motion; and thereby are made continually to exhibit a different appearance.

The events of human life, for the same reason, are endlessly variegated like the objects of sense. Wretched were the dull stagnation of constant prosperity, success, and ease. Intolerable would be the agitation and distress of unceasing, unabating, unrelenting toil, pain, disappointment, and vexation of spirit. But one thing being set over against another; the great, the prosperous, and the happy, are for ever admonished, reproved, and brought low: the poor, the despised, and the miserable, are cheered, supported, and exalted.

The word of God exhibits a resemblance to the system of nature, and to the conduct of Providence.

In it, we have the same pleasing, engaging variety : the same happy accommodation to the tastes, occasions, and necessities of mankind. The antiquarian and the naturalist, the politician and the legislator, the poet and the philosopher, the moralist and the divine, the man of retirement and the man of the world, the man of reason and the man of fancy, all find in Scripture a helper toward the discovery of truth and the attainment of happiness ; a guide to the understanding, a corrector and supporter of the imagination, a comforter of the heart ; a teacher of wisdom, a rule of faith, a source of joy. ~

The very structure of the sacred compositions is inimitably calculated, by a beautiful and easy transition from subject to subject, and from scene to scene, to relieve, and yet to keep alive, the attention ; presenting always a new and interesting object, or the same object placed in a new and interesting light. Thus, the tumultuous, noisy, and bloody scenes of Horeb and Rephidim—scenes of murmuring, rebellion, and war, are happily relieved by scenes of domestic tranquillity, love, and joy ; and we are prepared to attend Moses to meet God in the mount, by mixing in the virtuous, cheerful, and affectionate intercourse of his private family. ~

Let us, then, thankfully take the relief which a gracious God has in his word provided for us, and contemplate one of those calm, but neither uninteresting nor uninstrusive representations of human life, which come home to the bosom, and the fire,

side, of every man who has a heart, who has a relation, who has a friend.

The history of Moses now looks back, and reminds us of his being "a stranger in a strange land;" namely, of his fleeing from Egypt into Midian; of his arriving there, conducted of Providence, just at the moment, to render a seasonable service to the daughters of Raguel, or Jethro, the Priest of Midian; of the hospitable reception afforded him by that worthy man; and of the alliance which he formed with him, by marrying his daughter Zipporah. Upon his being called back to Egypt, to undertake the weighty charge which God had assigned him, he had intended, and attempted, to carry his wife and children along with him. But being reprov'd of God by the way, for neglecting in his own family the rite of circumcision, the seal of God's covenant, and either specially admonished from Heaven, or following the dictates of human prudence, he sends them all back to his father-in-law, as likely to prove either a burden or a hindrance to himself in the discharge of his great trust. For true piety, while it reposes entire confidence in God, will never presumptuously load Providence with what is the proper work and business of man. Diligence and foresight, as well as faith and hope, are its genuine offspring. But the tempest being now blown over, and Moses, of a messenger and a suppliant unto Pharaoh, being now become the head and leader of a great nation, it was natural for him,

and for his family, mutually to desire to be restored to each other. Jethro, therefore, having received information where Israel was, and what the Lord had done for them, takes his daughter and grandchildren, and carries them with him to the camp of Israel.

The innocent endearments of natural affection, and the honest communications of private friendship, are graciously intended to alleviate the cares of public life, and to strengthen the mind, by diverting it from incessant and intense application to serious business. No man can always be a general, a statesman, or a king. And happy it is for those who occupy those exalted, but troublesome stations, that they are frequently permitted to sink the public in the private character; and to drop the hero, the senator, the judge, the sovereign, in the man.

Distance has not alienated affection between the man of God and his family. A slighter affection is effaced and destroyed by absence; a stronger love is confirmed and inflamed by it. Good old Jethro satisfies not himself with sending by the mouth of another, a compliment of congratulation to his son-in-law; neither will he permit Zipporah and her sons to go unaccompanied, unprotected, through the wilderness, but, aged and infirm as he was, chooses himself to be their companion and their protector.

Moses seems to take delight in delivering to us this passage of his life. He is amiably minute and circumstantial in the detail of it. He dwells upon

the tender and affecting recollections of sorrows and of joys that are past. His heart is in it. He stops in his narration to tell us the names of his two sons; and his reason for giving them those names. "The name of the one was Gershom: for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: And the name of the other was Eliezer: for the God of my fathers, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." Is this beneath the dignity of history; of Sacred history? No, it is the most honourable province of history to exhibit the honest unsophisticated feelings of nature, the genuine workings of the human heart, the real, though humbler, scenes of human life. What signifies to us the meeting of two old men three thousand three hundred years ago? Much every way. One of them is a Moses, and that Moses is describing his own sentiments, unveiling his own heart. He can serve as an instructor and example to none, in respect of the prophetic dignity, as the bearer of the potent rod, as the man whose face shone by forty days' intimate communion with God. He can instruct but a few by his wisdom and sagacity as a prince and a lawgiver. But as a son, a husband, and a father, he is a pattern to myriads; and shall continue to teach to the end of the world.

How pleasant it is to find this great man the same in retirement and privacy, that he is upon the great theatre; and delineating a battle, a triumph, and a family-meeting, with the same simplicity and godly sincerity! Public men have, too often, two

different characters. Plausible and specious; humble, modest, and insinuating before the world, they are self-willed and tyrannical; confident, assuming, and brutal in private; they often fawn where they fear, and domineer where they have power. Not so the meek and gentle prophet and judge of Israel. He waits not in state, till his relations are admitted to pay their homage. He reckons it nothing derogatory to his high dignity, to go forth to pay the respect due to age; and to humble the son, however high in place, at the feet of the parent. "And " Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did " obeisance, and kissed him: and they asked each " other of their welfare; and they came into the " tent." Were it after a separation of but a day, friends have a thousand questions to ask, a thousand little incidents to relate, about their health, their entertainment, their dangers, their deliverances; about the observations which they have made, the projects which they have formed. What must it then have been for two such friends; for such a father and son, after a separation of many months, during which events of such high moment to both had taken place, to meet together again in health and comfort, to communicate mutually the full soul, to retire into the tent, to shut out the world, and give vent to the overflowings of tenderness and affection!

And with what a subject of conversation are they furnished! " And Moses told his father-in-law all " that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the

“ Egyptians, for Israel’s sake, and all the travail
“ that had come upon them by the way, and how
“ the Lord delivered them.” The most trifling incidents which befell a brother, a friend, a child, are interesting and important. What must then have been the emotions of Jethro, to hear the wonders of Egypt; to learn the great things of God, astonishing in themselves, and acquiring an additional weight, creating a new interest, from the person who related them, and who was himself so deeply concerned in the event?

But the good man is elevated, as he wondering listens to the wonderful tale, above all personal and selfish regards, above the partiality of private friendship, above the tenderness of natural affection. His heart dilates at the thought of a whole nation delivered, of a tyrant trampled in the dust, of the power, wisdom, and mercy of God magnified. “ And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which
“ the Lord had done to Israel; whom he had delivered out of the hands of the Egyptians. And
“ Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and
“ out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.
“ Now I know that the Lord is greater than all
“ gods? for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them.”

This friendly interview issues in a solemn religious service; in which Aaron and all the elders of Israel are called to assist. What a blessed influence has

true religion in conciliating kindness, and confirming friendship! When men cordially agree in the same glorious object of worship, the little peculiarities of form will not obstruct the mutual attraction of brotherly love. Prejudice will droop and die; and charity will draw a veil over its neighbour's singularities and imperfections. Happy the family whose union is cemented by piety; the family whose happiness and peace are built upon the love of God; whose employments, communications, and pursuits are improved and sanctified by prayer!

Due attention having been paid to the calls of hospitality, the dictates of private friendship, and the demands of filial duty, Moses reverts next "day betimes to the discharge of the duties of his public station. The time, the talents of the minister of God, are not his own; they belong to mankind. Superficial observers, who consider but the eminence of the place which a magistrate fills, the robe which he wears, the respect with which he is attended, look up to him with envy, and call him blessed. They think not of the thousand sacrifices which he is constrained to make, of his ease, of his inclination, of his health, of his natural propensities, of his private attachments. They talk of the honours and emoluments of his office; but they overlook his anxious days, his painful toils, his sleepless nights; the causeless hatred which he incurs: the unprovoked insults which he must bear, and must not resent; the surrender which he must make of solid and substantial felicity; and the exchange of

real and certain tranquillity, for uncertain usefulness, or precarious reputation. Who would not be a Moses, to sit on high, and judge the people? But who would be a Moses to have the people stand by him for judgment, "from the morning unto the evening!"

The obscure part of mankind are little sensible what they owe to Providence for their obscurity. They can go out and come in unnoticed. They can go to rest when they will, and continue it as long as they please. They have no vigilant, jealous, envious eye over them. They are free from the dreadful conflict of inclination and duty, of interest and conscience; of reverence for God and respect for man. They can enjoy their families and friends. What they have, however little, they can call their own. What, compared to these, and such advantages as these, is the ermine cloak, the ivory sceptre, the gem-encircled crown? Rejoice, O man, that the world knows thee not, cares not for thee, condescends not to trouble thy repose. Creep thy way silently, I beseech thee, to heaven; unafraid of being overlooked, neglected, and forgotten in the multitude of the redeemed, who there live and reign, and "rejoice, with joy unspeakable, "and full of glory."

Observe, how even a Moses may err, in an excess of zeal, through ignorance, inexperience, or inattention. Desirous of doing good by administering justice impartially, he cares not what trouble and labour it may cost himself. The service of fear or

of necessity is slow, reluctant, partial, and imperfect; the labour of love is cheerful, active, and persevering. Moses is in the way of his duty early and late. If the public be served faithfully, if equity be dispensed, if God be glorified, he is willing to spend and to be spent in such a cause. "And
" Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the
" people come unto me to inquire of God: when
" they have a matter, they come unto me; and I
" judge between one and another, and I do make
" them know the statutes of God, and his laws."

We have seen Jethro in the character of a pious man, an affectionate neighbour, and a kind relation. We see him now blending, with these excellent qualities, the character of an able statesman, and a sagacious politician. There is no man so wise as not to need instruction; and none so simple as to be incapable of sometimes giving advice. Jethro plainly perceived that the course of life which his son-in-law was pursuing must soon prove fatal to him. That, by attempting what was beyond his strength to bear or to perform, he was in the way of quickly rendering himself unable to do any thing at all. He therefore proposes a subdivision of the toil, by the appointment of proper men to the office of Judge, who might try and determine the causes of less importance, and apply to Moses, and to God through him, only in matters of high moment, and as the last resort. Thus Moses would be greatly relieved, many good men would be trained up to the

useful, honourable, and important employment of judging between his brethren; and the people, meanwhile, sustain no damage.

The qualities which he points out as requisite to constitute this character, show how carefully he had considered the subject, and how well fitted he was to advise in a matter of this kind. Let those who have the appointment of judges study well what he says, and act accordingly. "Thou shalt provide, out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens."

The first requisite in a judge, according to Jethro, is *ability*. He must be a man of sense, penetration, and discernment. Because, with the best intentions, a stupid, weak, or dissipated man will be apt to err in judgment; either, because he is unable to comprehend the cause, or will not employ the necessary time and pains to understand it.

But what are the greatest and most shining abilities unsupported by a principle of conscience? They are but a mischievous weapon in the hands of a bad man. A judge, therefore, ought to be a man that *fears God*. A man, not only restrained by respect to the world, or actuated by regard to reputation; for these are found feeble and inefficacious in the hour of temptation; these are fluctuating and unsteady as the opinions, passions, and interests of men; but the fear of the Lord is a perpetual un-

changing motive and restraint; the same in darkness as in the light, the same in secret as before the eyes of the whole world.

This principle is closely connected with, and indeed it naturally produces, a third quality, of primary importance, in this character. A judge must be *a man of truth*. A sacred observer of truth in what he says himself; a diligent promoter of truth, and an impartial avenger of falsehood and injustice in others. Even a regard to some of the principles of religion, unconnected with the love of truth and justice, which are of the number of those principles, might be apt to mislead a man. Compassion, for example, might dispose a judge to favour the poor man, though he has the worst cause. The all-wise God, therefore, thought it necessary to throw in a special caution to this purpose, lest a principle, amiable and excellent in itself, should be perverted into a source of injustice; and has enjoined by a positive statute, Exod. xxiii. 3, that the cause, not the person or condition of the man, should be considered by him who sits in judgment.

Jethro finally lays it down as essential to the character of a judge, that he be a man who *hates covetousness*. In this there is a strong insinuation, that where the love of money predominates, the exercise of all other necessary and suitable qualities are likely to be obstructed or perverted; ability, under such influence, may be rendered only more dangerous and hurtful; the fear of God may be lulled asleep;

* the heart hardened, the conscience, by the strong opiate of gold, reduced to a state of insensibility; and truth and justice may be hood-winked on the tribunal.

The history of our own country affords a melancholy example of the truth of this observation, in the conduct of that "greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind," Sir Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, and Lord High Chancellor of England, in the reign of James I. who with a soul that comprehended, filled, extended, and enlarged the circle of science; a genius that penetrated through the whole vast system of nature, an imagination that transcended the flaming boundaries of the world, and a heart devoted to the love of God and mankind—basely received the wages of unrighteousness, accepted a bribe to pervert justice, was accused and convicted of corruption, in the execution of his high and important trust, acknowledged his own shame, and was deservedly driven with disgrace to himself, and with the indignation, shame, and pity of a mortified and astonished world, from an honourable station which he filled so unworthily.

But, alas, after all, when we read of the appointment of judges and of generals, and of their requisite qualities, Of what does it remind us, but that men are selfish, covetous, litigious, and violent; tenacious of their own, and ready to encroach upon others? Wherefore is law? Wherefore are there tribunals? They are for "the lawless and disobedient." Make men just, gentle, kindly affectioned;

make them Christians indeed; and then war is at an end; the courts are shut up; then there would be no need of a judge, because there would be no offender.

The advice which was wisely and kindly given, is graciously and candidly received. A proud and self-sufficient spirit would have rejected the counsel, however salutary, because tendered by a stranger. But true wisdom only considers, whether the hint be useful, practicable, and necessary, without regarding from what quarter it comes. And such was the wisdom of Moses; and he was prepared for converse with God, who had learned deference and respect for the opinions of men. And thus, the very first rudiments of the Jewish constitution were suggested by the observation and experience of a stranger, and a Midianite. The great Jehovah disdained not to permit his prophet to be taught, and his people to be governed, by the wisdom and intelligence of a good man, though he was not of the commonwealth of Israel. If men were capable of learning to be wise and good, He who is wisdom and goodness itself would vouchsafe to teach them, not by precept only, but by example also. As Jethro suggested, so it was done. Moses was eased of a burthen intolerable, the course of justice was not stopped, God was glorified, and the world edified.

You must have observed, that I have once and again held out to your expectation, a subject of dis-

course from which I have once, and a second time, shrunk back. It is still before me, and I feel myself as reluctant as ever to proceed. Who is not ready to shrink under the awful terrors of the dispensation of the Law from Sinai? "Who is sufficient for such things?" But I must venture to go on, and endeavour to carry you with me to the foot of that tremendous mountain. And, I flatter myself, you have not been altogether disappointed, or injured, in being stopped a little in your progress. With recruited strength and spirits we shall attempt to advance on our way. But we shall first, from this eminence, survey the ground over which we have travelled. Eminence? No. Let us join the innocent, cheerful society in the tent of Moses, and learn to cultivate the endearing charities of private life. And having considered it well, let us retire, making such reflections as these—

That it is not fortitude, but folly, unnecessarily to expose ourselves, or those whom we love, to hardships and danger. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." It is our care, not our labour and reflection, which we are encouraged to cast upon God:

That it argues a deficiency in some moral principle or another, when persons whom nature and the obligations of society have united, discover an inclination to live asunder. Wisdom or necessity may impose a temporary separation; but well dis-

posed minds ever look to, and eagerly lay hold of, the means and the season of restoration and union :

That regard to public utility exalts and improves private friendship :-

That to promote the glory of God, his own virtue, and the good of his fellow-creatures, is the great and constant aim of every good man :

That as none is too wise to learn, it is a proof of affection to communicate useful hints ; and a high proof of wisdom to take and use them, from whatever quarter they come. There is one Being only, who is not to be instructed. “ How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! For “ who hath known the mind of the Lord ? Or who “ hath been his counsellor ? ”

And finally, that though we cannot successfully imitate eminent men in every particular of conduct, or in the display of talents which may be denied to ourselves, we are not thereby precluded from the exercise of the inferior talents which we possess, and from a virtuous emulation, where it is possible for us to succeed. Let me strive to be a Moses in some things, though I be conscious I must fall inconceivably behind him in most. Amen.

LECTURE XXVI.

EXODUS XIX. 16—22.

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.

IN man, as he came perfect from the hands of his Creator, the immortal principle, the “breath of life,” “the living soul” exercised its just dominion over the earthly and sensual part of his nature. In man, degraded by sin, we behold the grosser domineering over the purer, the heavenly subjected to the terrestrial, the soul a slave to the senses. When

our nature through grace shall be restored, the soul shall resume its empire; the body itself shall become spiritual, shall shake off the power of gravitation, and “ascend to meet the Lord in the air;” being “fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body.”

The dispensations of Heaven are suited to the condition of man. “God knows our frame, and “remembereth that we are dust.” He makes sense his road to the mind; he seizes the conscience, and melts the heart, by speaking to the eyes and the ears. And when we consider how easily, and through how many different channels, he can force his way to the inmost recesses of the man, who but must shudder at the thought of meeting the Father of spirits, ourselves disembodied spirits; at the thought of dropping the clay tabernacle in its native dust, and of becoming all eye to see God as he is, all ear to hear his voice, all soul to perceive and comprehend him! If God, encouraging and amiable in purifying and directing fire in the cloudy pillar, and in harmless, unconsuming fire in the bush at Horeb, be awful; if dreadful at Sinai, coming in flashing, dazzling, threatening fire to promulgate his law; what must he be, “coming “in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that “know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of “our Lord Jesus Christ?” If the sound of that trumpet which proclaimed the approach of God to Israel was ready to kill the living with fear, what must be the trumpet which shall awake the dead? Whatever majesty and solemnity may appear, in

the giving of the Law, every one shall, in a little while, behold it infinitely exceeded in the consummation of the Gospel.

God has hitherto declared his divine perfections by the effects which they produced. The plagues of Egypt awfully manifested his power and justice. The daily showers of manna, and water following Israel from the rock, bespeak his power and goodness. But he now opens his mouth, to proclaim in the ears of men his name, his nature, and his will. Let us, with Israel, at a trembling distance, contemplate this great sight, and listen with reverence to the Almighty uttering his voice.

The posterity of Abraham, according to the promise, is now become a great nation. But what are multitudes without government; and what government is a blessing without law? Happiness consists not in having such and such possessions, but in being fitted to enjoy what we have. The constitution of other states is the work of time, is the result of experience, arrives at maturity by degrees. Laws and restrictions, encouragements and restraints, are suggested by events. But when the great Jehovah condescends to become a legislator, the utmost extent of possibility lying open to his view, provision is made from the beginning for every case that can happen. The rule of his government is laid down at once; and the civil and religious constitution of that nation over which he chose to preside is established by a wisdom which cannot err. It was not unpleasant, as we were contemplating

the scene exhibited in the preceding chapter, to listen to a wise and good man, giving advice with respect to the administration of public justice. But we now tread upon holy ground; and we listen, not to a man like ourselves, but to the only wise God. The whole taken together unfolds an unparalleled display of mercy and majesty, of goodness and grandeur.

Forty-seven days have now elapsed since that "night much to be remembered," when the destroying angel walked through the midst of Egypt, and slew all the first-born. And how many singular and interesting events have taken place in that short period? The Red Sea has been divided; the bitter waters of Marah sweetened; bread from heaven rained down; a living stream extracted from the flinty rock in Horeb; Amalek discomfited! Whether of the two shall we most admire, the greatness of the works which God performs, or the facility with which he brings them to pass? What a high value we are taught to put upon time, when we see to what invaluable purposes, through the blessing and assistance of Heaven, a little time may be made subservient.

Three days more are employed in making solemn preparation for this celestial visitation; so that the Law was delivered exactly on the fiftieth day after the celebration of the feast of passover. And, in commemoration of it, the Jewish feast of Pentecost was ever after observed, and rendered illustrious in the annals of the Christian church, by a new dispensa-

tion, not of terror, but of grace; the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles of our Lord, in the miraculous gift of tongues. Even the minute circumstances of times and places may have a significance and an importance, of which we have at present no apprehension. And I am fully persuaded, when God shall be pleased to vouchsafe us clearer light, and fresh discoveries of his will, numberless instances of coincidence and resemblance between the legal and evangelical dispensations shall rush upon us, of which we can now form no conception. Why God has appointed the seventh day to be the weekly sabbath; why the Law was proclaimed from mount Sinai just after seven times seven days had elapsed from the going out of Egypt; why, in the possession of Canaan, the land was to be permitted to rest every seventh year; why the general release, or year of jubilee, was to be steadily observed after a constant revolution of seven times seven years; and why the Holy Ghost was given, "when the day of Pentecost was fully come;" or after seven times seven days from the day that "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us?" these are questions which we pretend not to resolve. But certain it is, these things have a meaning: "I know it not now, but I shall know it hereafter."

— Sinai, the scene of this splendid exhibition, is the highest eminence of a vast ridge of mountains which run from East to West through Arabia Petræa, as you go from the north-east coast of the Red Sea to Palestine. The adjoining eminence is

called Horeb, and is rendered illustrious by the miracle of the water issuing from the rock. And, from their propinquity, and their forming part of the same chain of mountains, they are often put the one for the other; and the adjacent desert country, is called indifferently the Wilderness of Horeb, or the Wilderness of Sinai.

Moses was first called up into the mount alone; and thence sent back to the people with repeated messages, full of tenderness and love. Preparation was made for the tremendous appearance of the glory of the Lord, by the most gracious and reiterated assurances of favour and protection. This is the endearing language which the great God condescends to employ on the occasion; "Ye have
" seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how
" I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you
" unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey
" my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then
" ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above
" all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye
" shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an
" holy nation. These are the words which thou
" shalt speak unto the children of Israel." The beautiful image of the eagle and her young ones is happy beyond expression; and evidently proceeds from Him from whose view no part of the world of nature lies concealed. The natural history of that king of the feathered race, were this the time and the place to introduce it, would be the best commentary on the passage. But we may at

least stop to illustrate, by comparing it with the same image, delineated by the same masterly hand, with still greater strength of colouring, and greater force and variety of expression. “For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.” The sagacity and vigilance of the eagle, in providing the means of support and safety for her callow brood; her strength and fierceness in defending them; her tender sympathy with their weakness; her anxiety to hasten on their maturity and capacity to provide for themselves; the pains which she takes to instruct them to fly,—as they are all fully justified by facts, so they are conveyed to us in language the most simple, plain, and elegant; and they raise us to the contemplation of an object of all others the sublimest, sweetest, most interesting, and most composing to the soul. They represent to us the all-comprehending view of eternal Providence, the never-sleeping eye of the Watchman of Israel, the unassailable protection of

the heavenly Guardian, the more than maternal care, diligence, and zeal, which Jehovah continually exercises over them that are his. "Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord."

As the friendship between God and Abraham, the father and founder of that great nation, commenced, and was confirmed, in the solemn ratification of a covenant, performed according to rites of God's own appointing; so the political existence and importance of that nation were directed to take their rise, in the *cutting* or *dividing* a covenant, with similar solemnities. And this was the tenor, these were the conditions of it. On the part of Israel, in one word, obedience to the voice of God; submission in all things to the will of their best friend and kindest benefactor, who could have nothing in view but their happiness. On the part of God, the promise of a profusion of blessings, temporal, spiritual, and everlasting; a rank among the nations which should render them the envy and wonder of the world; an establishment which length of time should not impair; a succession of prophets, of priests, and of princes, which was to issue in the eternal priesthood and unlimited sovereignty of One, whose government was to be an universal and everlasting blessing to them, and to mankind. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." *Seguleah*, a peculiar treasure, something exceedingly prized, and sedulously preserved, a gem of peculiar lustre and

value, which an affluent and powerful prince culls out from among many; ~~takes upon~~ his own particular charge, and will not intrust to the care of another.

Moses takes up this striking idea again, in that beautiful song of praise, in which, at the close of life, he recapitulates the wonderful ways of Providence to that chosen family: "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." The promise which follows in the sixth verse is wonderfully calculated to inspire ideas of dignity and importance, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." They had just left a country where the priesthood was held in high estimation; where the persons of those who bore that sacred character were inviolable, and their property exempted from the imposts which were laid upon that of other subjects. But the peculiar respect paid to this order of men, and the immunities which they enjoyed, served only to expose more glaringly the contrast, the degradation and distress of the great body of the people. Whereas here was a whole nation destined of Heaven to equal honours; not, a king and subjects, but a commonwealth of kings; not, one ministering at the altar, in the name of thousands, one admitted within the veil, and myriads removed to an humbling, mortifying distance; but a kingdom of priests, an holy nation, majesty and sanctity in one.

These are the words which Moses is commanded to rehearse in the ears of all the people. Having de-

scended from the mount, he collects them accordingly by their *elders*; the men first in age, first in wisdom, first in dignity, and authority; and delivers to them the high message which he had in charge. Impressed at once with the power and grace of their heavenly King, they as one man reply, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Which answer Moses again reports to his dread Employer. Thus, in the very preparatives for the publication of the Law, the mediation of the Gospel was clearly taught and inculcated; and thus, throughout, we perceive that guilty creatures can have no safe nor comfortable access to a holy God, but by means of "a days-man to lay his hands upon both:" and thus the very minister of a fiery Law exhibited a type of that great High-Priest, at once "merciful" and faithful;" "faithful in the things pertaining to God;" "merciful, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."

Moses is upon this informed, that God intended on the third day from that time, to manifest himself to all the people, as the Leader and Ruler of that vast army, and as the Employer and Patron of Moses his prophet, in a manner that should leave no room to doubt in whose name he spake, and by what authority he acted: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord." "I come to thee in a thick cloud." God already resided

among Israel, and presided over them, in a pillar of fire, and a cloud. But whatever be the medium of communication between the Deity and his creatures, it is capable of being increased and improved, far beyond imagination. There is a darkness grosser, and a cloud thicker, and more awfully impregnated, than any of which we have had experience. There is a voice louder, and a glory brighter than any which we have heard or seen. Who can declare, who can conceive the utmost extent of the power of the Almighty? There is a splendour infinitely superior to that of "the sun shining in his strength." There may be an angel excelling in might "Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God." Know we ever so much, there is a field of discovery before us, infinite as the immensity of JEHOVAH, to employ a duration of inquiry endless as his eternity.

A command is now issued to the people, to employ themselves that day and the next in solemn preparation for this august visit. They are directed, as an external mark of respect to the most holy God, as a token of obedience, and as an indication of inward purity, to wash their clothes, to abstain from whatever might defile the body or the mind, and even to deny themselves such innocent and lawful gratifications, as might have a tendency to disturb their attention and distract their thoughts. When God came to give the Law, he came after solemn warning, he gave evident signs of his approach, he declared to a moment when he was to be heard and seen in his majesty. But when he

shall come to execute the law, we are informed that he shall take the world by surprise; that men may be always ready. "Behold I will come on time as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

When but a friend or neighbour is expected to visit us, decency requires that our persons, our houses, our entertainment, be rendered as inoffensive and as acceptable as we can make them. The anxiety which men feel, and the pains which they take, to receive and entertain their superiors, is too well known to need any remark. It is only when the Kings of kings, and the Lord of lords announces his approach, that men are incurious, uncereemonious, careless, and indifferent.

The great Jehovah was to manifest himself first to the eye. "Be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people, upon mount Sinai." All is hitherto attractive and encouraging. The face of God is clothed with smiles. He comes "to dwell with man upon earth." But the grace and condescension of God, while they invite to the communication of friendship, forbid the boldness and freedom of familiarity. While he makes himself known as a Father, a Protector, a Guide, he permits us not to forget that he is, at the same time,

"a great God, and a great King." Therefore a strict injunction is given in the twelfth and thirteenth verses, "And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it; whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." This last expression, "When the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount," is evidently a caution and a threatening, not an invitation; and it seems to import, "Let him who dares, presume to approach nearer; let him come up into the mount at his peril." At the sound of that tremendous trumpet, they were ready to sink into the earth with terror, instead of desiring or attempting a nearer intercourse with the great and terrible God, who had put all nature into consternation.

As they were commanded so they did. All impurity is carefully removed; and they see, in solemn silence and earnest expectation, in hope mingled with fear, the gradual approach of this all-important, this eventful day.

At length, in all its pomp and importance, the third day arrives. Every creature, every element feels and gives witness to the appearance of its God. Heaven and Earth, Angels and Men, the Water and the Land, Air and Fire, announce the presence

of their great Creator and Ruler. I tremble as I read. What must it have been to see and hear? "And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." Lo, the hoarse thunder is lost in the louder sound of the trumpet; and that awful sound, in its turn, sinks into silence, before the all-penetrating, all-commanding accents of the voice of God himself. The thick darkness of a cloud, impregnated with the terrors of divine Justice, threatens one moment to extinguish for ever hope and joy; and that darkness, the next moment, is dispelled by the more terrible flashes of celestial fire. How poor the state of an earthly prince compared to this! "God maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire." What heart is not melted in the midst of this wild uproar? There is not an object of astonishment which we are acquainted with, but what enters into this description. Thunder, lightning, blackness of darkness, tempest, earthquake, the trumpet of God; and all these are but the coverings of terror, the harbingers of majesty and might. Behold, God is in the thunder, in the lightning, in the tempest, in the earthquake! they are mere instruments to do his pleasure.

But we are directed to one object perfectly placid and composed in the midst of tumult and confusion:

tion than now remains. It were better, therefore, to bring them together in one discourse, calculated for the purpose.

I conclude the present Lecture, with simply reading two or three short passages of Scripture, closely connected with, and serving to illustrate our subject; written at two very different periods, and in two very different states of the church. The first is in the history of Elijah, the great Restorer of the Law, near six hundred years after the giving of it.

“ And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went
“ in the strength of that meat forty days and forty
“ nights, unto Horeb, the mount of God. And he
“ came thither unto a cave, and lodged there. And
“ behold the word of the Lord came to him; and
“ he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?
“ And he said, I have been very jealous for the
“ Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel
“ have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine
“ altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword;
“ and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my
“ life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and
“ stand upon the mount before the Lord. And
“ behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong
“ wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the
“ rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in
“ the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but
“ the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after
“ the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in
“ the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice.
“ And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he

“ wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out,
“ and stood in the entering in of the cave: and
“ behold, there came a voice unto him, and said,
“ What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I
“ have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts:
“ because the children of Israel have forsaken thy
“ covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain
“ thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only,
“ am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”
The second is, the winding up of that wonderful
comparison and contrast of the Law and the Gospel,
which constitute the great body of the Epistle to
the Hebrews, and which the Apostle sums up in
these remarkable words, sixty-four years after the
advent of Jesus Christ. “ ~~For~~ ye are not come
“ unto the mount that might be touched, and that
“ burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and dark-
“ ness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet,
“ and the voice of words; which voice they that
“ heard entreated that the word should not be
“ spoken to them any more. (For they could not
“ endure that which was commanded, And if so
“ much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be
“ stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so
“ terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceed-
“ ingly fear and quake.) But ye are come unto
“ mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God,
“ the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable
“ company of angels, to the general assembly and
“ church of the first-born, which are written in
“ ~~Heaven~~, and to God the judge of all, and to the

“ spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus
“ the mediator of the new covenant, and to the
“ blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things
“ than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him
“ that speaketh : for if they escaped not, who re-
“ fused him that spake on earth, much more shall
“ not we escape, if we turn away from him that
“ speaketh from heaven ; whose voice then shook
“ the earth : but now he hath promised, saying,
“ Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but
“ also heaven. And this word, Yet once more,
“ signifieth the removing of those things that are
“ shaken, as of things that are made, that those
“ things which cannot be shaken may remain.
“ Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot
“ be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may
“ serve God acceptably with reverence and godly
“ fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”

LECTURE XXVII.

JOSHUA I. 17.

According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

JOHN I. 17.

For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

IN forming estimates of greatness, it is natural for men to consult their senses, not their reason. With the idea of royal majesty, we connect those of a chair of state, a numerous and splendid retinue, an ermine robe, a sceptre and crown. But wisdom and goodness are the qualities which confer real dignity, and command just homage and respect. Our pre-conceptions of earthly magnificence much exceed the truth; and knowledge speedily levels the fabric which imagination had raised. But the wonders of nature, the mighty works of God, grow upon us as we contemplate them. No intimacy of acquaintance reduces their magnitude, or tarnishes their lustre. And if the very frame of nature, the vastness, the variety, the harmony, and the splendour of the visible creation be calculated to fill us with astonishment

and delight ; how must the plan of Providence, the work of redemption, the great mystery of godliness, excel in glory !

In the discoveries which it has pleased God, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to make of himself to mankind, he has, at one time, addressed himself directly to the understanding ; at another, made his way to the heart and conscience through the channel of sense. The Law was given in every circumstance of external pomp ; it was accompanied with every thing that could dazzle the eye, fill the ear, and rouse the imagination. The kingdom of God, in the Gospel of his Son, “ came not with observation.” The great Author of the dispensation of grace, according as it was predicted concerning him, “ did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice “ to be heard in the streets.” He had, in the eyes of an undiscerning world, “ no form nor comeliness, no beauty why he should be desired.” And therefore, “ he was despised and rejected of men.” But we are taught to think very differently of his second appearance. “ He shall come in the clouds “ of heaven, with power and great glory :” “ In his “ Father’s glory, and all his holy angels :” “ With “ the voice of the archangel, and the trump of “ God.”

The manner of delivering the Law corresponded with its nature. It was clothed with thunder. It was surrounded with the blackness of darkness. It emitted flaming fire. It denounced death. The spirit of the Gospel, in like manner, breathed in

the mode of its publication. The doctrine of peace and reconciliation was delivered to men in the tenderest accents of human friendship. And temporal mercies and deliverances prepared the way for "spiritual and heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus."

We are now to bring these two dispensations together, and to compare the one with the other; in order that we may discover and admire that uniformity of design, which they jointly aim at promoting, the mutual lustre which they shed upon, and the mutual aid which they lend to each other.

By "the Law," we understand the whole of that scheme of the divine Providence, which related to the posterity of Abraham; the promises which were made to them, the ordinances prescribed, the character which they bore, the events which befell them; from the day in which that Patriarch left his kindred and country, till the day when the whole was swallowed up and lost in the person, doctrines, ordinances, life, sufferings, and death of Him, who was held up from the beginning, as the great, leading, commanding object in the eternal eye; the accomplishment of the promises, the substance of the types and shadows, "the end of the Law, for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Moses and Christ frequently speak of their mutual relation and resemblance, "I will raise them up," says God by Moses, "a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my

“ words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them
“ all that I shall command him. And it shall come
“ to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my
“ words, which he shall speak in my name, I will re-
“ quire it of him.” “ Search the scriptures,” says
Christ, “ for in them ye think ye have eternal life ;
“ and they are they which testify of me. For, had
“ ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me ;
“ for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his
“ writings, how shall ye believe my words ? ”

The persons, characters, and offices of the two legislators, therefore, naturally fall to be first considered, in tracing the resemblance of the two covenants which were established with mankind, through their mediation.

Of the birth of Moses, and salvation to Israel by him, there seems to have been a general expectation, in his own nation, and an apprehension of such an event, as general, in the minds of the Egyptians. Hence the bloody decree of Pharaoh to destroy from the womb all the male children of the Hebrews ; and hence, on the other hand, that eagerness to save a child, who, from the moment of its birth, exhibited unequivocal signs of his future greatness and usefulness. When Christ came into the world, multitudes were “ looking for the Consolation of Israel.” The prophecies concerning the promises of the Messiah were evidently hastening to fulfil themselves. The Jews expected their king : Herod dreaded a rival. The person of the promised Saviour was pointed out by signs in hea-

ven, and signs on earth, which it was impossible to misunderstand. An extraordinary star describes an unknown path through the air, to the place of his birth. A multitude of the heavenly host proclaim the joyful event to the shepherds. It was revealed unto Simeon, by the Holy Ghost, "that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." Conducted of the Spirit, he came into the temple at the moment when Christ was presented there, according to the Law. He recognises the promised of the Lord; and closes his eyes in peace. Anna, the prophetess, instructed by the same Spirit, gives a similar testimony, and speaks of "the holy child, to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

The circumstance of extreme danger which attended the birth of Moses and of Christ, and the wonderful means of their preservation and deliverance, constitute a striking mark of resemblance between them. Behold the long-looked-for deliverer of the Jewish church and nation ready to perish by the hand of Pharaoh; and the great king and head of the Christian world threatened by the murdering dagger of the Tetrarch of Galilee; while the earth was watered with the blood of their infant brethren. Moses is saved from destruction by the daughter of the tyrant who sought his life; he finds an asylum and a school in the house which he was destined to plague and to humble. And Jesus of Nazareth finds shelter in Egypt from the fury and jealousy of Herod.

The personal beauty and accomplishments of the Israelitish Lawgiver were probably intended to typify, in an inferior degree, the personal glory and excellency of Him, concerning whom the prophet thus writes, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever."

The wretched state of Israel, when Moses was born; and of the world, when Christ came to save it, are a melancholy and affecting counterpart to each other. The former subjected to the arbitrary authority of a sanguinary tyrant; the latter, in dreadful captivity to the prince of the power of the air, that "murderer from the beginning: that spirit, which ruleth in the children of disobedience."

Their mental qualities present a lovely and an instructive similitude. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were on the face of the earth." "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Compassion for his afflicted brethren early discovered the temper, and marked the character of Moses the man of God. Sympathy with the miserable, and that sympathy effecting seasonable relief for them, marked the paths of the Son of God, through a world of wretchedness. "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue now with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way."

“ When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with
“ compassion on them, because they fainted, and
“ were scattered abroad as sheep having no shep-
“ herd.” Over the grave of Lazarus, “ Jesus wept.”
“ When he was come near, he beheld the city, and
“ wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known; even
“ thou, at least in this thy day, the things which
“ belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from
“ thine eyes.”

The offices which Moses and Christ were called of Providence to execute, present us with points of likeness which it is impossible not to see, and equally impossible to mistake. “ And there arose not a
“ prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the
“ Lord knew face to face : in all the signs and won-
“ ders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of
“ Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants, and to
“ all his land ; and in all that great terror which
“ Moses showed in the sight of all Israel. No man
“ hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten
“ Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath
“ declared him.” Moses was King in Jeshurun, and conducted the thousands of Israel through many difficulties and dangers to their destined habitation : Jesus, God’s “ anointed King over his holy hill of
“ Zion,” brings his “ many” spiritual “ sons unto
“ glory.”

In order to constitute one deliverer for Israel, Moses and Aaron must unite their talents, must combine their force, must conjoin their offices : the prophet must co-operate with the priest ; two dis-

inct persons carry on one design ; but in the Saviour of the world, all talents, all virtues, all offices meet and centre ; the prophetic inspiration of Moses ; Aaron's pleasantness and grace of speech ; the regal dignity of the one, the sacerdotal purity of the other. In order to put Israel in possession of the promised land Joshua must succeed to Moses, and happily finish what his master has so successfully begun. But the great Captain of Salvation needs no coadjutor, can have no successor : " He gives grace and " glory ;" He leads his redeemed through the wilderness, introduces them into Canaan : maintains them in quiet and everlasting possession.

Other lines of resemblance will appear, as we prosecute the history, and shall not therefore be anticipated. But we must not dismiss this part of the subject without pointing out wherein the likeness fails, and how much the type falls short of the object which it represents.

The wonders performed by Moses in Egypt were wrought by a power delegated to, and conferred upon him for the purpose. The miracles of Christ were produced by a power original and inherent. Moses, though the meekest of all men, was betrayed into rashness, lost temper, and " spake unadvisedly " with his lips." But in Jesus, behold a spirit which was never ruffled, a tongue in which guile was never found ; lips that never offended ; a mind which no insult could disturb, no unkindness provoke, nor even the horrid pangs of an unmerited death rouse to resentment. " Holy brethren, par-

“ takers of the heavenly calling, consider the
“ Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ
“ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed
“ him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.
“ For this man was counted worthy of more glory
“ than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded
“ the house hath more honour than the house.
“ For every house is builded by some man; but he
“ that built all things is God. And Moses verily
“ was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a tes-
“ timony of those things which were to be spoken
“ after; but Christ as a Son over his own house;
“ whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence,
“ and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end.”

Moses died and was buried; Jesus “ died and
“ was buried, and rose again.” Moses received the
Law; Christ gave it. Moses and Elias attend the
Saviour on mount Tabor, as his ministering ser-
vants; Jesus receives their attendance and homage,
as their lord.

Having spoken of the resemblance between the
Authors of the two dispensations, we proceed, as was
proposed, to speak in the same view of the two dis-
pensations themselves.

And first, They rest on one and the same autho-
rity; they are dictated by the same unerring wis-
dom, and they are directed to the same great and
glorious end. Indeed one of the great proofs that
both are of God, is the conformity of both to the
nature and condition of man. The precepts of the

Law are not novel constitutions, which had no existence till the days of Moses ; neither are the consolations of the Gospel, new discoveries of grace, unheard of till the four thousandth year of the world. Sinai thundered and lightened in Adam's conscience the moment he tasted the forbidden tree ; and drove him to seek refuge " from the presence of the Lord " God, amidst the trees of the garden." The terrors of the Law raged in Cain's guilty breast, long before there was any record written on brass or stone. And the promises of pardon and salvation are coeval with the conviction of the first offender, and the denunciation of his punishment. The tongue which pronounced on man the doom of death, proclaims the glad tidings of life and recovery.

I know that the *Law* is of God, for I have that within me which acknowledges and approves its rectitude and excellency : and, even when he condemns me, I am constrained to call it " holy, just, and good." I know that the *Gospel* is of God, for I feel that within me which welcomes its approach, discerns its suitableness, rejoices in its fulness, rests upon its truth. It is of God, for it descends to the level of my guilt and misery, it corresponds with my hopes, it suits my necessities.

Our blessed Lord took an early opportunity of explaining himself on this subject. An absurd idea prevailed, that the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a total subversion of the Mosaic dispensation. An absurdity into which some Christians have inadvertently given, for want of making a plain and ne-

cessary distinction between those particulars of the law which are in their own nature eternal and unchangeable, like the nature of that God who is its Author, and those which, being typical and prophetic, ceased of course when the predicted event arrived, and the type, having fulfilled its design, was lost in the thing typified; and those which, being temporary and transitory, ceased with the occasion of them. Of the first sort, are the precepts of the decalogue, or the ten commandments: which, under every constitution that affects such a being as man, must be immutable and everlasting. Of them it is, that Christ said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled." Of the second class, are the laws of the daily sacrifice, the great annual feasts, the Levitical priesthood, and the like. They pointed out Christ the Lord, they led to him, they were lost in him. And in the third rank, we place the law of circumcision, the political œconomy of the Jewish nation, all that related to the possession of Canaan; and which ceased, of course, with the dissolution of their government, and the loss of their national importance. These observations being attended to, and kept in mind, will prevent the confusion arising from the ambiguous

acceptation of the word "law," as expressing the Old Testament dispensation.

The Law, then, and the Gospel, the two tables of stone delivered to Moses, and the "grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ," coincide, secondly, in this, That they both point out, with equal clearness and force, the necessity of a Saviour. Every word pronounced by the voice of God from Sinai is, in truth, a sentence of condemnation. While it enjoins future obedience, it fixes past guilt. While it says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath," it accuses of idolatry. While it recommends the observance of the Sabbath, it charges home the violation of it; and so of the rest of the precepts of the decalogue.

The Law, therefore, carried the Gospel in its bosom, as the new-changed moon exhibits a great body of obscurity, embraced by a small semicircle of light; but which is to be irradiated by degrees, till the whole becomes one great globe of light and glory; and Moses performs the part of "a school-master to bring us to Christ."

To hear of a constitution by which I might have lived, after my life is forfeited; is only to embitter my misery. It is like hearing of a cordial, after a man has swallowed poison. Now it could never be the design of the gracious Lawgiver to insult human misery, by holding out a system which could not

avail the guilty. While then the divine justice lays down the Law in all its strictness, purity, and extent, saying, "I am the Lord who will by no means clear the guilty;" "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" the goodness which condescends to give a law at all, the wisdom which explains it, the patience that forbears to punish its transgression, all plainly and distinctly proclaim the necessity and the existence of an atonement, and lead to "the bringing in of a better hope."

Thirdly, The spirit of both dispensations is a spirit of love. God enforces upon Israel obedience to the Law from Sinai, by the consideration of his being the Lord, which "brought them up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage:" "who has borne them on eagles' wings, and brought them to himself." And "love," on the part of man, "is the fulfilling of the law." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all my mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The Gospel, in like manner, has its source in love, the love of God; and its great aim and end is to produce love to God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "And we love him because he first loved us."

“ The love of Christ constraineth us, because we
“ thus judge, that if one died for all, then were
“ all dead : and that he died for all, and they which
“ live should not henceforth live unto themselves,
“ but unto him, which died for them, and rose
“ again.” And, “ by this shall all men know that
“ ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
“ He that says he loves God, and hateth his bro-
“ ther, is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother
“ whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom
“ he hath not seen ?” And, when both shall have
produced their full effect, “ perfect love shall cast
“ out fear,” the voice of God shall be unaccom-
panied with thunder and lightning, cloud and tem-
pest. The storm is in the mind of the guilty crea-
ture. The wrath of fire is not in God, but in fallen
man ; in “ the carnal mind, which is enmity against
“ God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, nei-
“ ther indeed can be.” When that is extinguished,
all is peace. The aim and labour of the Gospel is
not to reconcile God to man ; but to reconcile men
to God : for “ God is love ; and he that dwelleth in
“ love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

Fourthly, Both the legal and evangelical dispen-
sations equally discover to us our distance from God.
The one, by enumerating and declaring our offences ;
the other, by enumerating and declaring the ten-
der mercies of our God. The Law treats us as
alienated friends, whom it is needful to convince,
to reprove, and humble. The Gospel considers us
as friends restored, no “ longer strangers and

“ foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and
“ of the household of God :” “ Once darkness, but
“ now light in the Lord ; once afar off, but made
“ nigh by the blood of Christ.” “ The Law shows
“ us how far we have deviated from the path of duty
“ and happines ;” the Gospel conducts back through
our wandering, unravels the intricacies and errors
of our dark steps, and replaces us in our father’s
house. Moses informs us that we are wrong, “ like
“ sheep going astray ;” Jesus is “ the way, the truth,
“ and the life,” and takes us under the care of “ the
“ shepherd and bishop of souls.” Moses points out
the dreadful depth into which we have fallen ; the
dreadful distance from heaven to hell ; Christ re-
veals the glorious height to which we are raised ;
the glorious distance from hell to heaven. Moses
tells me what I ought to be and to do ; Christ
makes me such as he would have me to be. “ And
“ you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses
“ and sins, wherein in time past ye walked, accord-
“ ing to the course of this world, according to the
“ prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now
“ worketh in the children of disobedience : among
“ whom also we all had our conversation in times
“ past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires
“ of the flesh, and of the mind ; and were by na-
“ ture the children of wrath, even as others. But
“ God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love
“ wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead
“ in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ,
“ (by grace ye are saved ;) and hath raised us up

“together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

But the Law was delivered to the world in a very different manner from the publication of the Gospel;—in fire that burned, in tempest that roared, in a cloud that darkened, in words that threatened. It awed man into distance; it inspired terror. But the Gospel comes in light that consumes not, in glory that dazzles not, in language that threatens not. The Law says, “Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death. There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live; when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.” The Gospel says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” “Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” But to the impenitent and unbelieving, the Gospel speaks the same terror which the Law did from Sinai; nay, it wears a still more frowning aspect. “Indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which

“ at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and
“ was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”
“ He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy,
“ under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer
“ punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought
“ worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of
“ God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant,
“ wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing,
“ and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace.”
And on the other hand, to them that believe, the
Law speaks in the mildest, gentlest language of the
Gospel; for there “ is therefore now no condemna-
“ tion to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk
“ not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “ And
“ the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed,
“ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,
“ long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and
“ truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving
“ iniquity, and transgression, and sin.” “ And
“ showing mercy unto thousands of them that love
“ me, and keep my commandments.” I know not
whether the whole Bible contains an expression of
goodness more singular and striking than these
words which issued from the mountain that burned
with fire. Our fears are alarmed at the mention of
the great and dreadful name—“ the Lord God, a
“ jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers
“ upon the children.” But justice has its limits.
It may be stretched out to the third or fourth ge-
neration of offenders. Yet the “ Lord will not
“ strive continually, neither will he keep his anger

“for ever.” But grace knows no bounds. When mercy is to be extended, it looks forward and forward, from a third and a fourth, to thousands of generations of them that love God. In what promise of the New Testament is the love of God preached more sweetly than in this precept of the Old?

Both dispensations, then, have their mildness, and both their terror. Their mildness from the grace of the Creator; their terror from the guilt of the creature. And if the proclamation of the Law were thus dreadful; if the alarm of judgment to come shake the foundation of the everlasting hills; if Sinai tremble, and the rocks melt before the Lord, coming as a Protector and a Friend—What must the sessions be; the great day of doom, the awful hour of execution, when the judge shall come, “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” When the heavens, being “on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” “Consider this, ye that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

“Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle; which the Lord hath pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices:

“ wherefore it is of necessity that this Man have
“ somewhat to offer. But now hath he obtained a
“ more excellent ministry, by how much also he is
“ the Mediator of a better covenant, which was es-
“ tablished upon better promises. For this is the
“ covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
“ after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my
“ laws in their minds, and write them in their
“ hearts; I will be to them a God, and they shall
“ be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their
“ unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities
“ I will remember no more. In that he saith, A
“ new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now
“ that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to
“ vanish away.” And all “ this is of God, who
“ hath made us able ministers of the New Testa-
“ ment, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the
“ letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if
“ the ministration of death, written and engraven
“ in stones, was glorious, so that the children of
“ Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses
“ for the glory of his countenance, which glory was
“ to be done away; how shall not the ministration
“ of the Spirit be rather glorious: For if the mi-
“ nistration of condemnation be glory, much more
“ doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in
“ glory. For even that which was made glorious
“ had no glory in this respect, by reason of the
“ glory that excelleth. For if that which is done
“ away was glorious, much more that which remain-
“ eth is glorious.”

We are assembled this night, my brethren, the subjects of the Law; the students of the Gospel; the expectants of Christ's second appearance. "See then that ye resist not him that speaketh from Heaven." Ye are happily set free from the law of ceremonies; happily subjected to the law of morality; and "not without law unto Christ." "Stand fast therefore in that liberty, wherewith Christ hath made you free." Enjoy and improve what you have; affect not more than a wise Providence permits. Look forward to that day, when you shall join an innumerable company of angels, yourselves like the angels of God in Heaven; when you shall associate with the spirits of just men made perfect, yourselves perfect as they are; when you shall add your voices to the celestial choir, in singing "the song of Moses and the Lamb:" when you shall see the face of God without dying; and hear his voice without quaking for fear. "Now, unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

Sacred Biography;
OR THE
HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS:
BEING
A COURSE OF LECTURES;

DELIVERED AT
THE SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

BY
HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

VOLUME III.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.

John viii. 58.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Revelation I. 8.

Seventh Edition.

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1815.

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mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread: and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath borne seven: and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

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wife, and said, The Lord give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And they went unto their own home. And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

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Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into mount Hor, in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount. And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

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fore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us: and Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

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Num. xxvii. 12—14.—And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes. That is the water of Meribah in Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin.

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Num. xxxv. 9—15.—And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan, into the land of Canaan, then ye shall appoint you cities, to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the man-slayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment. And of these cities which ye shall give, six cities shall ye have for refuge. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them; that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.

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Deut. xxxi. 1—3. And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I am

an hundred and twenty years old this day: I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said.

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LECTURE I.

2 TIM. I. 8—10.

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner : but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God ; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began ; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

EVERY dispensation of the Divine Providence seems to be the basis, and the preparation of a farther display of wisdom and goodness. The last discovered purpose of the Eternal Mind is the continuation, the extension, and the improvement of that which immediately preceded it ; and the glory hitherto displayed in the ways and works of God, however excellent, is hastening to lose itself in “ a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” yet to be revealed. Periods of immeasurable, incomprehensible duration had flowed, before this fair and majestic frame of Nature was called into existence. For we

read of a purpose and grace formed and given, “before the world began ;” and of “a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world :” of an election made, and of “eternal life promised, of God “who cannot lie, *before* the foundation of the world.” Who can tell what systems have preceded that which now exists ? We know from Scripture that one more glorious is to succeed it. “According to his “promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Pct. iii. 13. And who can tell what future systems may arise, in endless progression ? As well might the fluttering insect, which was born in the morning and perishes at night, presume to dive into the ages beyond the flood, or with bold, adventurous wing attempt to soar into the Heaven of Heavens, and declare the wonders of the world of spirits.

But though system may succeed system, though dispensations change, one thing is immutable, “the “gracious purpose of him who worketh all things “after the counsel of his own will.” One great object was kept in view before the world began ; is still kept in view through the whole extent of its duration ; and is to be pursued through the endless ages of eternity. Do you need, Christian, to be told what it is ?—The Salvation of the world by Christ Jesus. It is a little thing to say, that Abraham saw his day afar off ; that of Him Moses wrote, Isaiah prophesied, David sung, and Paul preached. “These things the angels “desire to look into.” On this exalted theme, the everlasting counsels of peace revolved ; to mature them,

the powers of heaven and earth were shaken ; and to bring them to their consummation, a new creation shall expand infinite space, and a succession of ages that are never, never to expire. Placed at whatever point in this immense sphere, our eyes are still attracted to the glorious Centre, from which all light, and life, and joy issue ; and in whose light every inferior orb revolves and shines.

The epistle of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, from which I have taken the subject of this discourse, is addressed to Timothy, whom he styles his “ dear-ly beloved son in the gospel,” and who had been ordained first bishop of the church of the Ephesians, Paul himself was at that time a prisoner at Rome, and totally uncertain respecting the issue of a cause, which affected his life, before the Imperial court. What mercy, what justice, was to be expected from such a prince as Nero—the monster who could fire his country, shed the blood of his virtuous preceptor, and destroy his own mother ? But we behold in the prisoner a spirit much exalted above the fear of a tyrant, a mind prepared for the worst that could befall him, and expressing anxiety, not about personal safety, but about the success of the gospel and the steadfastness of a beloved disciple. He solemnly charges that disciple not to suffer himself to be one moment shaken in the faith, by the persecution to which the cause of Christ had exposed himself, or the ills which he might still be called to endure for the testimony of Jesus. And in order to enforce

his charge, he suggests a view of the gospel which eclipses all created glory, “ stills the enemy and the “ avenger,” plucks from death his sting, and robs the grave of its boasted victory. He represents Timothy and himself as engaged in a cause which the great God himself, before all worlds, regarded as of superior importance, and made peculiarly his own; which “ at sundry times and in divers manners” he disclosed, and which at length, “ by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, he made manifest ” to all men. Paul glories in the idea of being a worker together with God in this generous design; in his appointment to the office of “ a preacher, and “ an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles ” in the great mystery of godliness; in displaying and dispensing to a guilty perishing world the unsearchable riches of Christ—who had “ abolished death, and “ brought life and immortality to light through the “ gospel.”

In tracing the history of the patriarchs who lived both before and since the flood, from Adam to Abraham, and from Abraham to Moses, we have endeavoured to point out this unity of design, this steadiness of co-operation, this progress of discovery. By whatever name the typical person is designed, Patriarch, Prophet, or High-Priest, under the Old Testament dispensation; whatever be the designation of the ministering servant under the New, Apostle, Evangelist, Pastor, or Elder, the office, and the end of the institution is one and the same—to declare the Son of God, the Saviour of men, “ for the

“ perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the
“ body of Christ, till all come in the unity of the
“ faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
“ unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the sta-
“ ture of the fulness of Christ.” Eph. iv. 13.

Borne down the current of Divine Revelation, we have arrived with Israel at the mountain that burned with fire, and, at awful distance, with trembling eyes, beheld its summit involved in clouds, clothed in terror ; and with wonder and joy we have contemplated the cloud dispersing, the thunder ceasing, the terror done away, and Mount Sinai transformed into Mount Zion. Whatever farther progress we make, in whatever direction we proceed, we shall find this exceeding high mountain still in view ; and, whether under the conduct of the leader and commander of Israel, or of the champion of Christianity, we are equally led by “one” and the same “Spirit” in “one hope” to “one Lord, one
“ faith, one God and Father of all, who is above all-
“ and through all, and in all.” Eph. iv. 5, 6.

We shall endeavour to connect our past and following course of Lectures, from the view here presented to us by the Apostle, of the plan of Providence in the redemption of the world ; and the execution of it, “by the appearing of our Saviour
“ Jesus Christ.” And you will be pleased to observe,

I. It is God's *own purpose*. The contrivance, the discovery, the progress, the accomplishment, all, all is from Heaven. In what relates to this

world, in what contributes to the sustentation and comfort of a transient life, human sagacity, ingenuity, and industry, may challenge a little praise. Men soon invented and improved the necessary, useful, and ornamental arts. They soon learned to build cities, to work in brass and iron, to "handle the harp and organ." But their dexterity, address, perseverance, and success, in the pursuit of perishable interests, form an humiliating contrast with their awkwardness, indolence, inattention, and incapacity in their higher, their spiritual and everlasting concerns. Wise in trifles, or to do evil, how to do good they find not. The experiment was permitted to be fully made. It was proved how far the powers of nature could go. Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, improved one upon another; and what was the result? "The world by wisdom knew not God." "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Rom. i. 22, 23. ~

To increase our wonder and mortification, when God's purpose of mercy was declared, when his method of salvation was revealed, men were "slow of heart to believe." They "resisted the Holy Spirit: Christ came to his own, and his own received him not." The disciples themselves understood not, believed not "what the pro-

“phets had spoken.” No wonder then that the doctrine of the cross was “to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.” Here then is a *purpose*, which not only is not of man’s forming, but which man uniformly and violently opposed. In other cases we behold the wisdom of God blending itself with human counsels; directing, subduing them to its determination; and the great God graciously condescending to divide his glory with the creature. But if there be a design more peculiarly *his*, from which he claims undivided praise, which was not, which could not be of man, nor “according to our works,” it is this, the gracious design of “saving them that believe,” by Jesus Christ and him crucified.

II. This leads us forward to observe, that as the work of redemption is **JEHOVAH’S** *own* peculiar *purpose*, so it is a purpose of *grace*. The thoughts of “the Father of Spirits” are unfolded, and they are “thoughts of peace.” Transporting view! Behold the Greatest and most Glorious of all Beings, employing himself in devising the means of doing good, of communicating happiness, of relieving the miserable; and forming a scheme of benevolence which extends from eternity to eternity, and comprehends innumerable myriads of rational beings restored, recovered from ignorance, from guilt, from misery, to wisdom, to holiness, to perfect and exalted felicity. Blessed *purpose*! The formation of man, the creation of an universe, are only parts of it. Man was formed, that he might be redeemed;

was sent into this world to be prepared for “heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The firmament was expanded, adorned, lighted up, to witness the display of “the exceeding riches of the grace of God;” “in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus;” and every successive opening of the plan of Providence is only a new discovery, a more endearing expression of the love of Christ “which passeth knowledge;” of “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” Think, O guilty man, think O my soul, what a *purpose* of *justice*, think what a *purpose* of *wrath* would have been, had “God sent his Son into the world to *condemn* the world!”—The spirit fails at the dreadful thought. Behold insulted Deity descending to confound the pride and presumption of the builders of Babel, and mark their speedy dispersion. Behold a righteous God descended on a purpose of fiery indignation against polluted Sodom, and consider, in trembling silence, the smoke of her torment ascending up to heaven. Behold a whole world of ungodly men overwhelmed with the waters of a deluge, and learn how dreadful, how inconceivably dreadful a deliberate *purpose* of vengeance is. And when you have pondered it well, reflect with wonder, gratitude, and delight, that “God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John iii. 16. That Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Again,

III. This *purpose* of God, this *purpose* of grace,

was formed, *before the world began*. Human purposes are feeble, fluctuating, unenlightened; obstructed by unforeseen events, they are constrained to change their direction, and to assume a new form. The imperfect work which, through many difficulties, is at length executed, bears no manner of resemblance to the original design. Man performs what he may, because he cannot effect what he would. He is governed by circumstances over which he has no power. But the distinctions of past and future vanish away from before the eye of God. There can be no difficulty in the way of almighty power, nothing concealed from the view of omniscience. The duration of a world shrinks into a single moment before him who is "from everlasting to everlasting." Contingency and chance can have no effect on the counsels of Him "who seeth the end from the beginning," and saith, "*My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure.*"

Christianity as old as the creation! It boasts a much more ancient date. The creation is of yesterday; the world is not yet six thousand years old; but Christianity is of the essence of God himself. It bears date, "of old, even from everlasting." "This pure river of water of life" proceeds out of the throne of God, who dwells in inaccessible light. Imagination wearies itself, thought is lost, in tracing it up to its source. Bless the Lord, O my soul, who from eternity, in the greatness of his might, in the plenitude of his goodness, in the incompre-

...ty of his wisdom, condescended to fix the
...nds of thy habitation, to arrange the events of
thy mortal existence, to prepare thy place in the
heavenly mansions; who, "before the world be-
gan," surveyed with complacency and delight his
own benevolent design, his own glorious work; the
universe which he was about to speak into being,
the bit of clay he was to fashion into a man, the
immortal spirit which his breath was to inspire, the
needy perishing wretch whom his mercy was to re-
deem. But,

IV. The blessed Author of this gracious, ever-
lasting purpose, has revealed and bestowed it in his
own way. He "hath saved us," "not according
"to our works," nor in the way of our own wisdom
—It is *given us in Christ Jesus*. From the forma-
tion of the merciful plan of salvation to its consum-
mation in glory, the necessity of a Mediator is never
for a single moment left out of view. His name,
like a sweet perfume, is wafted on the wings of every
wind. Survey the world of nature, through all
its vast extent, and in its minutest particle, and we
behold the omnific "WORD by whom all things
"were made, and without whom nothing was made
"that is made." He also "upholdeth all by the
"word of his power;" "all power is given unto
"him in heaven and in earth." Open the history
of redemption at whatever page, and it still unfolds
the mercy of God *through Christ Jesus our Lord*.
Conducted of the Spirit back to the eternal days of
uncreated light, admitted to the deliberations of the

councils of peace, we hear the Son of God proclaim, "I am Alpha," "the beginning." Carried forward in joyful hope to the day when he shall "make all things new;" the same voice still proclaims, "I am Omega," "the ending," "who was, and is, and is to come." Search the Scriptures. Consult the prophets; to him they "all give witness." Meditate the promises; "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God." Examine the record; "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." John v. 11, 12. Consider the ministration of angels; the covenant of promise "was ordained by angels, in the hand of a *Mediator*." Harken to a voice from the most excellent glory: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him." All is light and glory; but not a single ray of light is transmitted through any medium but this. All is grace—free, sovereign grace; but there is not one intimation given, not one act of favour conferred, but through the "one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." To him let every knee bow, to him every tongue confess, of things in earth and things in heaven.—What saith the Scripture? "He putteth no trust in his saints, and his angels he chargeth with folly." Is not this a plain declaration, that the highest and holiest of created beings are imperfect and dependant; that

they stand in need of a Mediator and Advocate in order to their acceptance with a holy God? And is it not for this reason, that, “when he bringeth in “the First-begotten into the world, he saith, And let “all the angels of God worship him?”—It being the fundamental law of God’s *everlasting kingdom*, before the world was, and after it shall be burnt up and pass away, with all that it contains; under Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles; under the legal, and under the evangelical dispensation; under the dominion of grace, and in glory; on earth and in heaven—that there should be access to, hope in, and acceptance with God, for men and for angels, only through the Son of his Love, the Eternal Word which made and supports all things.

V. In conformity with this glorious *purpose and grace in Christ Jesus*, what hath been executed? Every thing worthy of a design so grand, every thing worthy of its great “Author,” worthy of the glorious “Finisher of our Faith.” His *appearing* hath *made it manifest*.—The clearest-sighted of the prophets, like the blind man only half restored to vision, saw men but as trees walking; but now, under the Gospel, the dullest and most despised among believers sees every thing plainly: he sees the eternal purpose of God, written in characters which he can read and understand; he compares the model with the structure, and finds the tabernacle erected in the plain, the perfect counterpart of the pattern delivered in the mount—He finds the Scriptures

fulfilled, the predictions verified, the types explained, realized, justified; all things finished in and by the Lord Christ.—

What hath been executed? *He hath abolished death*, that hated, hideous spectre, through fear of whom the fallen posterity of Adam are “subject to bondage.” He hath restrained the power, put an end to the dominion, annihilated the existence of the king of terrors. Through sin death gained admission into the world; in sin his empire is founded; by sin he is armed with a mortal sting. By the great propitiation for sin he is banished thence, his reign is terminated, his sting is plucked out. Ask that sickly, pining creature, what it would be to have the disease which is perceptibly preying upon his vitals abolished? Ask that dejected prisoner of despair, what it would be to have his debt discharged, and the writ of his confinement abolished? Ask the wretch condemned, what it would be to have the fatal hand-writing of judgment that is against him abolished?—And let the answers you would receive convey, as well as they can, a sense of the obligation under which we lie to Him who hath done away the deadly plague which wastes, which threatens, which destroys the soul; to Him who hath paid the enormous debt “to the uttermost farthing,” purchased a release, set open the prison doors; to Him who hath cancelled the awful sentence of a righteous God, “nailing it to his cross.” He hath *abolished death*, with all the woe that leads to it, all the dreaded woe that is in

it, all the more tremendous woe that succeeds : sickness and pain, anguish and old age ; the bitter pang that rends asunder the body and the spirit ; the hell that follows. And by what wonderful means hath all this been effected ? “ through death ” he has destroyed “ him that had the power of “ death.” Into his own snare the deceiver has fallen ; by his own weapons the enemy has been disarmed ; his own triumph hath proved his ruin. “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is “ thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the “ strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, “ which giveth us the victory, through our Lord “ Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

What hath been executed ? He hath *brought life and immortality to light*. It is more than flattering hope or fond desire ; it is more than the speculation of a philosophic mind, or the presumptuousness of reasoning pride ; it is more than patriarchal confidence, or the dawning light of Mosaic revelation. It is desire warranted, and hope supported, by facts ; it is reason justified and confirmed by demonstration ; it is the morning light of promise, advanced to the perfect day of discovery and accomplishment. “ He that raised up Christ from “ the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, “ by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Rom. viii. 11. “ For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, “ even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God “ bring with him.” 1 Thes. iv. 14. This is not the cold peradventure of a sage, saying, “ If in this

“ I err, I willingly err :” but the blessed assurance of an apostle, saying, “ I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” 2 Tim. i. 12. “ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.

And can it be necessary to inquire, Who caused this light to arise ? Who removed the veil, and disclosed the hidden glories of eternity ? What power could tune the human tongue to such raptures, and inspire a mortal breast with such holy and triumphant joy ?—“ God is the LORD, which hath showed us light”—It is “ the Revelation of Jesus Christ, who showeth to his servants things which must shortly come to pass.” “ By the *Gospel*, life and immortality are brought to light ;” “ even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints : to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles ; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Col. i. 26, 27.

—Learn hence the folly and danger of all opposition to the plans of eternal Providence. “ He

“is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered?” Job ix. 4. “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Ps. ii. 1—4. 6. 8. “If this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.” Acts v. 38, 39. “Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no ways pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Matt. v. 18. “Woe be to him who striveth with his Maker.” Sinner, learn wisdom in time; cease from the ruinous contention; “it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;” thou art wounding, destroying only thyself. “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” Ps. ii. 12.

—Christians, be of good courage; “in patience possess ye your souls.” God will support and vindicate the cause that is his own. His truth and

faithfulness, evinced by the providential interposition of ages past, are a full security for his care and attention through ages to come. Time, which impairs all things else, gives stability, force, and effect to the purposes of heaven. The dissolution of the frame of Nature is the consummation of the work of redemption. As the writings of Moses are an improvement upon the traditional knowledge of the antediluvian world, and as the Gospel is an improvement upon the Law and the Prophets, so, “according to his promise,” we look for a new economy, which shall be an improvement upon, and an extension, confirmation, and accomplishment of the gospel dispensation.

—Learn to aspire after the honour and happiness of working together with God in forwarding this gracious design. It is the glory of the most exalted of all beings; and therefore, surely, deservedly claims the employment of the noblest powers of man. What heart would not rejoice in putting forth a helping hand towards rearing this blessed fabric, were it but to drive a pin, or fasten a cord? Remember that carelessness here is highly criminal; that to sit still is not only robbing yourself of the most exquisite pleasure, and declining the highest honour of which your nature is capable, but is at the same time the highest insult to your Creator, and the most certain means of incurring his displeasure. Look around you, and observe those myriads of your fellow-creatures, less favoured of Heaven than you

are, consider them well, and be to them in the place of God. Extend to them that compassion which the Father of mercies hath extended toward thee.

See, my Brothers, they are deformed, diseased in body; they are distressed in their circumstances; they are grieved in mind;—alas! they “are dead in “trespasses and sins!” Lost to God, lost to all the valuable purposes of existence, better for them they had never been born. But yet they are your brethren; they are susceptible of pleasure and pain like you; the same sun enlightens them; the Gospel aims at relieving them as well as you; the same God created and sustains and cares for you both. Have pity upon them; strive to restore them to peace with themselves, to peace with the world, to peace with God. “It is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little “ones should perish.” Matt. xviii. 14. “Jesus, “thou Son of David, have mercy upon them.” Let the *purpose of grace* comprehend them, even them also.

☛ Son of God, who didst restore agility to the lame, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the faculty of speech to the dumb, life to the dead; and who givest wisdom to the wise,—thou shalt renovate all things, thou shalt abolish death, and point out the path of life! O, I shall bless thee with transports of joy ineffable, in the day when the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the earth with all that it

contains shall be consumed!—Then thy suffering creatures, delivered from all the ills which oppressed them, shall be clothed upon with a glorious and immortal body, fashioned like to thy glorious body; shall be perfectly conformed to thy blessed image—the image of the first-born among many brethren! Then the Saviour of the world shall pronounce, not from the expiring agony of the cross, but from the radiance of a throne above the skies, “It is finished!” Then he who “maketh all things new,” shall with complacency contemplate this second glorious creation, and proclaim, “All is good, yea, “~~very~~ good!”

LECTURE II.

EXODUS XXIV. 15—18.

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire, on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

BREAD is not more necessary to the support of human life, than religion is to the happiness of a rational being. Man, in his better, his immortal part, “lives by every word that proceedeth out of “the mouth of God.” In more than one instance, the miracle has been exhibited of sustaining the body without food, and yet no pain nor inconvenience felt; but for the soul to exist, and to exist in comfort, undirected by the precepts, unenlightened by the discoveries, unsupported by the consolations of religion, is a miracle not to be performed. It is the more to be lamented, that the attempt is so often fatally made, of living “without God in “the world;” of pursuing a happiness that is independent of the Great Source of light and joy;

of seeking peace, rest, and enjoyment in the neglect or violation of his commandments. Happy it is for men if, after having made the fruitless experiment of "seeking the living among the dead," and after having at length discovered that success is vanity, and that disappointment is vexation of spirit, they have been persuaded before it was too late, to draw their felicity from the pure and never failing sources of faith and a good conscience; happy they who reconciled to God through Christ Jesus their Lord, enjoy real tranquillity in life, and well-grounded hope in death.

We tremble as we behold Moses advancing to the summit of the burning mountain to meet God. Who can walk into the midst of a flaming furnace and live? But is it possible to remove from God an instant of time, a hair's breadth of space? No: God is about our path and our bed, is watching our going out and coming in, our lying down and rising up. God is in this place; and were our eyes opened, we should even now behold his face clothed with the frowns of just displeasure, or beaming with the smiles of paternal love.

Was the law given by "the disposition of angels," arrayed in all their majesty and might? O how benign their aspect, how affectionate their assiduity, how vigilant their care, could we but behold them, while they aid the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, while they attend the assemblies of a Christian church, and minister to them who are the heirs of salvation! As the awfulness and so-

lemnity of the prophet's condition are not peculiar to him, and to that important occasion, so neither are the privileges which he enjoyed, nor the communion to which he was admitted peculiar and personal. Christian, you have but to retire into your closet, and to shut the door after you, and you are immediately on the top of a higher mountain than Moses climbed, and are near to God, as he was in the most precious moments of the most intimate communication. Alone, or in company, we have access at all times to the throne of grace; and we have what gave him safety and confidence in drawing nigh unto God—an advocate with the Father, a great High Priest, a Mediator betwixt God and us.

The great Jehovah having delivered, in every circumstance of magnificence that could excite attention, procure respect, and enforce obedience, that Law, whose general nature, tendency, and design, together with its relation to the evangelical dispensation, were the subject of a former Lecture, proceeded to regulate their civil polity. But not by an audible voice, in the ears of all the people, as He had done the law of the ten commandments, but in private conference with Moses, to be by him delivered to the people. He delivered those institutions of a civil and political nature, which regarded their social and national capacity. In studying these, the lovers of Scripture will rejoice to trace the justest and most comprehensive views of human nature, the noblest and most liberal ideas of legis-

lation, the most perfect equity, the profoundest sagacity, and most unbounded kindness and benevolence. But it exceeds our strength, and it consists not with our plan, to go into the detail of these excellent statutes. We pursue the history.

The voice from Sinai having, in dreadful glory, proclaimed the conditions of this new covenant; directions are given for the solemn and public ratification of it. This was done that the obligation which was originally, invariably, and necessarily binding upon the parties, might acquire additional force from voluntary consent, and from the intervention of august and significant ceremonies. I trust it will be neither unentertaining nor uninteresting, to attend to the description of those ceremonies as they stand upon the sacred record. They are highly interesting, whether we consider them as the venerable remains of a very remote antiquity, being no less than three thousand three hundred and fifty-one years prior to the present time [A. D. 1801]; or as the original compact, in the constitution of an ancient, important, well-known, and generally interesting national government; or as forming part of the plan of a divine administration, whose force can never be spent, whose influence on human virtue and happiness can never expire.

God has “spoken once in his holiness,” in a sensible manner; has made himself seen, heard, and felt by a whole people together. But it is neither consistent with his dignity, nor favourable to man’s improvement, that He should always or often make

himself known in that manner. He has spoken thus once, that every hearer might have a personal reason for acknowledging and adoring the dread Jehovah, the Fountain of all power, the supreme Author of every establishment. And he speaks thus but seldom, that all men may learn to revere conscience, his vicegerent upon earth, to study his word, the interpreter of his nature and will ; and to respect and “ be subject to the powers which be “ ordained of God, not only for wrath but for con- “ science’ sake.” Directions are accordingly given to ratify the covenant, not by the whole people in person, but by their representatives. The persons summoned to attend on this great occasion are : first, Moses himself, who was to represent the Mediator between the high contracting parties ; then Aaron and his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, who represented the Levitical body, or order of priesthood ; and finally, seventy of the elders of Israel, who were to act in the name of the congregation at large. When we observe the names of Nadab and Abihu in this respectable list, and look forward to their dreadful and untimely end, we are led to a reflection of no small importance in studying the sacred volume ; namely, That the destination of Providence in raising particular persons to eminent, honourable, and important stations in civil society, is something extremely different from “ the election “ according to grace.” A Cyrus and a Nebuchadnezzar may be the servants of God, to execute his vengeance or his love, without knowing any thing

of their Employer; and their private and personal character may remain unaffected by their public conduct. The man according to God's own heart, in the view of some great object of public utility, has sometimes been found dishonouring God by private vice, and degrading, destroying himself, while he has been materially serving the world. This most serious consideration dictated to the great Apostle of the Gentiles that necessary rule of conduct: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. ix. 27. And it is a loud call to every one who acts in a public capacity, to support and adorn it by private virtue and unaffected piety. While the great God was thus putting honour on these seventy-three persons in the eyes of all the people, he sees it necessary to put and to keep them in mind of their distance and dependance, "Worship ye afar off: Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come nigh."

This message being reported to the people, they express their cheerful and unanimous consent. "All the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Verse 3. Moses upon this reduces into writing the articles of the treaty between God and the people, to be recited aloud in the hearing of all the parties concerned, previous to the solemnities of the ensuing ratification. According to the form observed upon such occasions, rising up early in the morning,

he builds an altar under the hill, the emblem of the divine presence, on the one side; "and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel;" verse 4: or an heap consisting of twelve large stones, according to the number of the tribes, to represent the people on the opposite side; and upon it he offers a burnt-offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord. The application of the *blood* of the victim principally challenges our attention in the celebration of this awful rite. It was divided into two equal parts: one half was put into basons, and placed by the twelve pillars of stone; where in all probability were arranged the seventy elders, the representatives of every tribe, standing by the pillar peculiar to their tribe: the other half was sprinkled upon the altar on the other side. Thus, that which constituted the life of the sacrifice was separated, and Moses standing between the divided parts, and having some of the blood, now denominated the blood of the covenant, or of the purifying victim, in his hands, rehearsed aloud the words of the covenant, in the audience of the people, who were represented by their elders, and then solemnly demanded whether they acceded to the conditions of it.

The form of adjuration employed in such cases, as you heard in a former Lecture, (Vol. I. Lect. XIII.) now in the hands of many of you, was inexpressibly awful and tremendous. "As the body of this victim is cleft asunder, as the blood of this animal is poured out, so let my body be divided and my blood shed, if I prove unsteadfast and

“ perfidious.” Under an engagement of this dreadful import, they consent to the conditions of the treaty, saying, “ All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” Verse 7. Whereupon Moses takes of the blood, and sprinkles it upon the people, in the persons of their representatives, as he had before sprinkled it upon the altar, expressing thereby God’s acceptance of their persons and services, and his engagement to fulfil all that the covenant promised on his part. Matters being thus adjusted, and peace established, the burnt-sacrifice is succeeded by a peace offering, and the parties, as friends, sit down to partake of a common repast. This is evidently the meaning of the expression in the end of the eleventh verse : “ Also they saw God, and did eat and drink ;” that is, as in the presence of the most high God, at peace with him, and at peace among themselves, they did eat of the same bread and drank of the same cup. It would be easy, were it necessary, to confirm this interpretation, by quoting the practice of other nations in later times, undoubtedly borrowed from rites of God’s own institution. It would appear from the letter of the narration, that the scene of this sacred feast was a higher region of the mountain than that where the covenant was ratified. He builded the altar *under* the hill, and set up the pillars, as it is v. 4 ; and when the solemnities of that inferior station were duly celebrated, the nation whom God had thus chosen is exalted to a superior rank, and admitted to a more intimate union with their Maker. “ Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God now

“shines, calling to the heavens from above, and to the earth, Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” Ps. l. 5. Purified by blood, the blood of the covenant, they are encouraged to mount higher and higher, to approach nearer and nearer; they are enabled, with enlightened eyes, to discern more clearly, and to look more steadfastly.

Being sprinkled with blood, “*then went up*” Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.” Verses 9—11. What a stream of splendid ideas here rushes in upon us! “They saw the God of Israel.” They saw Him whose presence is the glory of Heaven, the light of whose countenance is the joy of angels and archangels; they saw Him descended to earth to be the light, glory, and joy of his people; to dwell among them, and to be their friend, their father, and their God; they saw Him engaging himself by every thing that could affect the senses, kindle the imagination, or melt the heart, to guide and protect them, to provide for them, to bless them, and to do them good. “They saw the God of *Israel*,” their father’s God, their own covenant God, and the God of their seed to the latest generations. They saw GOD! but, what did they see? That face whose lustre constrains the cherubim to cover their faces

with their wings—those eyes, which “as a flame of fire go up and down through the earth,” which discern impurity in the heavens and folly in angels—that mouth which spake the universe into existence, and whose lightest word shakes the foundations of the everlasting hills—the hand that wields the thunder, or the feet that walk upon the swift wings of the wind? No:—The nobles of Israel had shrunk into nothing before such an awful display of Deity. He needed not to have laid his hand upon them; one glance of those piercing eyes which guard the law, had been sufficient to consume them in a moment. What then did they see?—What was *under* his feet; and even that, something which could not be represented, expressed, or described; “as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.” Verse 10. Like Paul caught up into the third heaven, but incapable to tell whether in the body or out of the body; caught up into Paradise, and listening to the conversation of its blest inhabitants, but what he heard were words unspeakable, “which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” 2 Cor. xii. 4. Was it needful to caution such men, and such a people, against idolatry? What similitude could they employ who, though they enjoyed the fullest and most satisfying demonstration of Jehovah’s presence, felt their understanding confined, their imagination checked, their senses confounded? They are lost in a splendour which at once attracted and repelled, which was only the foundation and external veil where glory resided, the pavement not the ceiling,

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the habitation not the inhabitant ; as ^{plendour} resembling the transparency of the gem which seems to transmit the light, and the solidity of the gem which no force can penetrate.

Is it too fanciful to suppose, that there is singular beauty in the *colour* of the jewel here specified by the sacred penman, who was an eyewitness of this glorious appearance, and who attempts to convey an idea of what he saw ? “ Paved work of a sapphire-stone,” the happy medium between the ~~fair~~ and dazzling lustre of the diamond, and the dim familiar complexion of the emerald : not the fiery glare of the empyrean, nor the sober verdure of the earth ; but the pellucid azure of the crystal sky, which equally corrects and tempers the dazzling power of the noon-tide sun, and the oppressive gloom of the midnight hour ; which possesses light enough to discover the object without distressing the organ, and shade sufficient to relieve without sinking into obscurity ?

Not overwhelmed, but cheered and elevated by this moderated display of the divine glory ; having seen God and yet living ; feeling his hand upon them, yet uncrushed by its weight ; the nobles of the children of Israel conclude the services of this eventful day by the banquet of peace and love. *They* must now return to secular employments, and descend from the mountain : but Moses has yet farther manifestations of the will of God to receive, and is commanded to ascend still higher. “ And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into

“ the mount, and be there : and I will give thee
“ tables of stone, and a law, and commandments
“ which I have written, that thou mayest teach
“ them.” Verse 12. Be our attainments what they
will, who is he that “ hath attained, or is already
“ perfect ? ” Our arrival at one eminence is only to
see from its summit another, and thence another
still rising above us : but in moral and intellectual
pursuits, this is a disappointment that mortifies not,
an exercise that fatigues not : the joy of Heaven is
to make progress in the contemplation and disco-
very of perfection that knows no limit, knows no
end.

From this high elevation, Moses is informed that
he is to receive the same law in a different form :
“ I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and
“ commandments which I have written, that thou
“ mayest teach them.” Verse 12. As he arises
towards Heaven, the dispensation of which he was
the minister becomes more and more plain and
palpable. A matter of such deep importance must
not be trusted to the vague and varying traditions
of fallible and changing men, but collected into a
record that can defy the lapse of time, and preserve
unchanging truth and dignity amidst the revolutions
of empire and the wreck of nations. This was gra-
ciously intended to prevent the necessity of a fre-
quent interposition of Deity, which must at length
have diminished its impression by commonness and
familiarity. What God therefore at first, with his
creative finger, curiously engraved on the heart of

man, He audibly pronounced amidst the awful glories of Sinai, and afterwards committed to writing on tables of stone for perpetual preservation. And happy it is for man that he has not been left, for moral and religious instruction, to the traditions of men, who are ever changing and inconsistent with themselves, or to the flimsy, imperfect, contradictory systems of philosophy and science, falsely so called, but that he is brought to the law and to the testimony, to Moses and the prophets, to the Saviour himself and his apostles, to a Bible and a sabbath. Happy it is that every one is furnished with one and the same light to his feet and lamp to his paths, and that all are taught of God from the least to the greatest. But indeed the care of Providence in preserving this precious record, and in transmitting it to us unaltered, unimpaired, is a perpetual miracle, a series of revelations, which we are bound to acknowledge with wonder, and to improve with gratitude.

In the next ascent into the mount, Moses is accompanied, to a certain length at least, and no doubt by divine appointment, by Joshua his minister, on whom God began to put honour thus early, in order to exalt him in the eyes of the people whom he was destined one day to command, and to prepare him betimes for the wise and faithful discharge of his high office, by communion with God. As this absence of Moses from the weighty duties of his charge, was to be of longer continuance than usual, the management of civil affairs, and the administration

of justice were committed in the mean time, to Aaron and Hur, his companions and coadjutors on the mount, when by the lifting and holding up of his hands Amalek was smitten before Israel. Was ever spot of this earthly ball so highly honoured as that barren mountain in the midst of the desert? Persons, not places, possess dignity. The presence of God confers greatness and importance: He can receive none from created, much less from artificial pomp and magnificence. The great God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands." "The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; but thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Is. lvii. 15.

The curiosity of travellers has been excited to visit this scene of wonders. But is there not an intentional obscurity spread over the description, to baffle idle curiosity, and to call us to the spirit and intention of the dispensation, not the external apparatus of it? Wherever there is this book, wherever there is a principle of conscience; wherever there is common reason and understanding, there is the law, there is Sinai, there is God. It is not to make a pilgrimage to the holy sepulchre, to stand on Cavalry, to drive infidels by force of arms out of the country, that constitute the faith and piety of

the Gospel; but to know Christ Jesus and him crucified in “the *power* of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” Phil. iii. 10.

The appearances of God’s presence and providence vary their aspect, according to the distance at which they are contemplated, and the medium through which we view them. What to the nobles in the mount appeared “as it were a paved work of sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness,” verse 10; to the multitude in the plain wore a more threatening and terrible appearance. “The sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire, on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel.” Verse 17. Fire at once consumes and refines; it leaves to the pure gold all its solidity and value, and lays hold only of the dross. Moses undismayed, because following the command of God, advances into the midst of consuming fire; and so far is Nature from being overpowered and destroyed by this keen, piercing element, that it is rather cherished and strengthened by it. Flame supplies the place of food; instead of perishing in a moment, at the end of forty days, without any other means of subsistence, we see the prophet descend in additional glory, and renovated vigour; for all creatures are and do that which their Creator wills.

The next seven chapters contain a minute description of that sacred structure and its service, which God intended should be “the shadow of

“good things to come;” of which every iota and tittle was of divine contrivance and appointment; and undoubtedly had a meaning and significance which we cannot in every particular find out to perfection.—The pattern of it was showed unto Moses in the mount, and particular directions were given for its construction; in these were employed the forty days mentioned in the close of this chapter; when the history suddenly breaks off to exhibit a scene of a very different nature, which, if God permit, will form the subject of the next Lecture; namely, the unprovoked revolt of Israel to idolatry, the fabrication of the golden calf and the hasty descent of Moses to stem that dreadful torrent of guilt and wrath which had begun to flow.

In the ratification of the covenant between God and Israel, we see the stress that was laid upon blood. The blood of the innocent victim must be poured out, and the altar must be sprinkled with blood. The elders of the people must be purified with blood. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission, no friendship, no peace, no access: life must be paid to redeem life. Blood in the sacrifice is the one thing needful; the one thing significant: blood in religious offices, is all in all. Blood applied to any other purpose is contaminating, unhallowed, unwholesome for food, polluting not purifying to the flesh, is a source of corruption and death, not of health and life. The idea of blood, in one view or another, runs through the whole history of re-

demption. It occurs not more frequently in the Old Testament than in the New. One great sacrifice has indeed put an end for ever to the future effusion of blood; but it is still symbolically held out as the medium of reconciliation, and of access to God. "We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. i. 7. We are redeemed, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter i. 18, 19. "We draw nigh to God through the blood of his Son." When we approach to ratify every one his personal covenant with God at the communion table, we commemorate the death of Christ in the symbols of his body broken, and his blood shed. "This is the blood of the covenant," said Moses, "which the Lord hath made with you," and "this is the New Testament in my blood," saith Christ, "shed for the remission of sins." When we look toward eternal rest, the holy city, the Jerusalem that is above, the new and living way which leads thither, which conducts into the holiest of all, is through the rent vail of the Redeemer's flesh. "His blood be upon us and on our children," exclaimed the Jews, while they were crucifying the Lord of Glory. Dreadful imprecation!

O Lord, require not our blood of our own hand, nor of every man at the hand of his brother. O Lord, let this man's blood be upon us and upon our children, not as an oppressive load, as it was on

those who with wicked hands impiously shed it, but as an atonement for our sins, as a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, acceptable unto God : that “ being
“ justified by faith, we may have peace with God,
“ through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also
“ we may have access by faith into this grace wherein
“ we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”
Amen. Amen.

LECTURE III.

EXODUS XXXII. 1—4.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden ear-rings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings, which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron, and he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

THE real instances of human folly and extravagance far exceed the conceptions of the most lively imagination. All history and every day's experience justify the mortifying account which the prophet gives of our corrupted nature—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. The partiality of self-love, and the charity of a kind disposition, would at times lead us to form a more favourable judgment both of ourselves and of others, than we deserve. The form of sin, seen in its nakedness, is

so hideous, that we shrink from it with horror ; but use familiarises the spectre ; and we are insensibly led to bear, to be, and to do that which once we abhorred. Could a prophet have foretold one half of the irregularities, the excesses, the enormities of our lives, we should have deemed the prediction a falsehood and an insult ; and, with the resentment of conscious virtue we should have been ready to exclaim in the words of Hazael, “ Is thy servant a “ dog, that he should do this great thing ? ” Yet, alas ! the event has wofully verified the cruel imputation ; and exhibited the man fallen from his excellency, become the very monster he justly detested ; the man sunk into an object of pity, of scorn, or of detestation to himself and to mankind.

Many practices appear to us absurd and unnatural, merely because we are not accustomed to them. Herodotus relates, that Darius king of Persia, having assembled the Greeks who were under his command, demanded of them, what bribe they would take to induce them to eat the dead bodies of their parents, as the Indians did ? Being answered, that it was impossible for them ever to abandon themselves to so great inhumanity, the king, in the presence of the same Greeks, demanded of some Indians, what consideration would prevail with them to burn the dead bodies of their parents, as the Greeks did ? The Indians expressed the utmost horror, entreated the king to impose upon them any hardship rather than that. Among the Hottentots, the aged, so long as they are able to do

any work, are treated with great tenderness and humanity; but when they can no longer crawl about, they are thrust out of the society, and put in a solitary hut, there to die of hunger, or age, or to be devoured of wild beasts. If you expostulate with them upon the savageness of this custom, they are astonished you should reckon it inhuman:—"Is it not much greater cruelty," they ask, "to suffer persons to linger and languish out a miserable old age, and not put an end to their wretchedness, by putting an end to their days?"

Idolatry is one of those practices, to our apprehension, so foolish and unreasonable, that we wonder how it ever obtained footing in the world; and with difficulty are we brought to believe the avidity with which whole nations have given into it. The particular circumstances of the Israelites in the wilderness, render their proneness to idol worship peculiarly monstrous and unaccountable. The chain of miracles which accompanied their deliverance from Egypt; that constant symbol of divine presence which attended them, the pillar of fire and cloud; the daily miraculous supply of bread from Heaven; the recent anathema pronounced against the worship of images from the dreadful glory of mount Sinai; the scrupulous care employed, if we may use the expression, to exhibit no manner of similitude of the Deity in Horeb, to prevent the possibility of a pretence to use, themselves, or to transmit to posterity, any sensible representation of the invisible God;—all these, superadded to the

plainest dictates of common sense and reason, clothe with a blackness and malignity not to be expressed the strange conduct which is the subject of this chapter.

Moses, foreseeing the length of his absence in the mount, had wisely delegated his power to Aaron and Hur, that the operations of government, and the administration of justice, might suffer no interruption. God, the great God, was now vouchsafing to employ himself in prescribing a mode, and a ministry of worship, for his Israel, which should possess all the pomp and splendour displayed by the nations in the service of their false gods, together with a sacredness and dignity peculiar to itself. He was preparing to gratify their very senses by external show, as their souls by heavenly wisdom. He was planning a tabernacle, establishing a priesthood, and appointing festivals and sacrifices, whose magnificence should leave them nothing to regret in the glory which they had seen in Egypt; and, at that very time, they are employing themselves in devising and executing a plan of religious service, equally disrespectful to God, and dishonourable to themselves.

Their guilt begins in sinful impatience and presumption. In matters both of life and of religion, men greatly err when they take upon them to carve for themselves. "Vain men would be wise, though
"man be born like a wild ass's colt." Job ix. 12. The transition is so sudden that it seems incredible. Not many days are past since they had given the

most solemn, explicit, and unreserved consent, to the whole of the divine law. "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." Verse 7. The treaty had been but just ratified by a covenant, a sacrifice, and a feast, with a solemnity not easily to be forgotten. The noise of the mighty thundrings has scarcely ceased; the ineffable glory of the God of Israel is yet present to their eyes; they have not well recovered from the terror inspired by that voice which made heaven and earth to tremble. Yet even thus circumstanced, as one man they fly to the appointment, not of a new leader and commander, though that had been ingratitude without a parallel, but, with an impiety the most shocking and confounding, to the creation of a new God. And the very first exercise of the power which was committed unto Aaron for the public good, is to be the leader, the abettor, and an example, in practising the abominations of that country from which they had been so happily delivered.

"And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him: Up, make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." Verse 1. There is a sottishness, a madness, as well a wickedness in certain vices, which, at first sight, we should deem inconsistent with each other. The irrationality of the brute, the frenzy of the lunatic, and the malignity

of the demon, here discover themselves at once ; and leave us perplexed which we are most to wonder at and deplore. What shall we say of the stupidity which talked of *making* gods, and of following that as a guide which itself could not move but as it was carried ? With what notes of indignation shall we mark our abhorrence of that base ingratitude which could speak contemptuously of such a benefactor as Moses : “ *This* Moses, the man that brought us up “ out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him ? ” Verse 1. With what holy resentment must we execrate the spirit that could deal thus perfidiously, presumptuously, with God ?

After we have vented our anger and astonishment upon the conduct of these vile Israelites, let us pause and examine ourselves. Brought by a strong hand and a stretched out arm into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, have we never reverted in thought, in desire, in practice, into that very thralldom of sin from which the Son of God came to set us free ? Lying under the weight of benefits much more precious, and bound by engagements equally solemn and explicit, have we never swerved from the path of duty, never lost sight of our vows, never failed in our obedience ? With so much clearer and fuller discoveries of the being, nature, and will of the one living and true God, have we feared and loved him, and only him ; have we never bowed the knee to Mammon, never worshipped in the house of Rimmon, never kissed the image of Baal ? Alas, alas ! we hate and condemn some sins, merely because they are

not our own, while we stand chargeable in the sight of God and man, with equal or greater offences of a different kind ; so blinded as not to perceive, so self-deluded as not to feel their enormity.

Is it not amazing to observe on the part of Aaron no reluctance against this horrid proposal ; to hear from his lips no remonstrance ? Is it thus he discharges his sacred trust ? Is this the man whom Jehovah was, in the mean while, designing to advance, and promoting to the dignity of the priesthood ? — Many things have been alleged in extenuation of his fault, though nothing can amount to a full vindication of his conduct. The conciseness of the Sacred History, it has been said, may have suppressed some of the more favourable circumstances, and exhibited only a general view of the subject. Some of the Rabbins (in Schemoth Rabba, Sect. xli. fol. 156) pretended that his colleague in office, Hur, had lately been massacred in a popular commotion for daring to resist the prevailing frenzy : and that Aaron complied through fear of similar treatment, after having thus deprecated the divine displeasure ; “ O Lord, I look up to thee, who knowest the hearts
“ of men, and who dwellest in the heavens : Thou
“ art witness that I act thus contrary to my own
“ will. Lay it not to my charge.”

Others explain away great part of the criminality, both of Aaron and of the people, by alleging that all they demanded, and all that he gave them, was an external object, where they might deposit the homage which they wished to render to the Supreme

God; and thus they interpret the request of the people, "Make us a sensible object of divine worship, which may always be before our eyes, and supply the place of God when we shall be told of all the wonders he wrought for us in Egypt." (R. Juda, in Lib. Cozri. Part I. Sect. xcvi. fol. 47.) And a learned prelate (Patrick, Bishop of Ely) of our own country labours to prove, that Aaron presented only a hieroglyphic of the strength and power of the Deity, and he produces a few passages from ancient authors, to prove that the ox was an emblem of royal and sovereign authority, and the horns, in particular, a common and well known emblem of strength.

A fourth excuse has been pleaded in behalf of Aaron, founded on the letter of the sacred text. He feigned readiness to comply, according to these apologists (August. Tom. IV. Quæst. xli. in Exod. Pag. 118: and Theodoret. Tom. I. in Exod. Quæst. lxvi. Pag. 3), in hope that the demand of their golden ornaments for the fabrication of the idol, acting upon their love of finery, or of wealth, might bring them to a stand, and break their resolution. But why set up an elaborate defence of a man who stands condemned by his own brother, who had the best means of information; and for one who himself had nothing, or worse than nothing, to produce in his own behalf, when charged by Moses with his fault?

Those spoils of the Egyptians had not been obtained in the most honourable manner. Israel "borrowed and paid not again;" and it proves a dread-

ful mate to them. If they had not carried off the gold, they might perhaps have kept clear of the gods of Egypt. But ill-gotten wealth never was, and never can be, a blessing; and unwarrantable devices sooner or later come to entangle the feet of those who use them. Mark how one rapacious domineering passions wallows up many others. "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" And yet behold the daughters of Israel cheerfully sacrificing the darling embellishments of their persons to a mistaken principle of religion! If there be a passion more violent than another, it is the love of gold in the heart of an Hebrew; but we see one more violent than even that, the delirium of idolatrous superstition.

It is dangerous to have the patterns of evil before our eyes. We soon learn to bear with what we see frequently; we are insensibly led to approve what we have learned to suffer without being shocked; and what we heartily approve we are not far from adopting. Israel has sustained greater injuries in Egypt than we are at first aware of, and they have been more deeply hurt in their minds than in their persons. The stripes of an Egyptian task-master are healed by the lenient hand of time; but the wounds inflicted by the impure rites of Egyptian idols are still festering at the heart, and threaten death.

Aaron is too eager and intent upon his shameful work to escape the suspicion of being hearty in it. "And he received them at their hand, and fashioned

“ it with a graving-tool, after he had made it a
“ molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O
“ Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of
“ Egypt.” Verse 4. All that industry, all that art
could do, is employed to confer lustre and value on
this worthless object; and yet he would have it be-
lieved, when he is called to account, that the form
and fashion of the idol were the effect of accident
not of design: “ I cast it into the fire, and there
“ came out this calf.” Verse 24. What a pitiful
figure does ingenious, industrious wickedness make,
when it stands exposed, convicted, self-condemned!
—But the framing and erecting this idol is not the
whole extent of Aaron’s criminality. I am still
more shocked at beholding an attempt to blend with
its profane worship, the sacred day, the sacred ce-
remonies and services of the true God. “ And
“ when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it;
“ and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-mor-
“ row is a feast to the Lord.” Verse 5. What con-
cord hath Christ with Belial? An attempt to form
such an union as this is more grossly insulting than
even avowed neglect or opposition. It freezes the
blood to observe a repetition of the same august ce-
remonies which were lately employed in the mount,
for confirming the grand alliance between the great
Jehovah and his people, in the settling of this
strange league between Israel and a bauble of their
own invention. “ They rose up early,” as men in-
tent upon their purpose; the altar is reared, the
sacrifice is offered up, the peace-offering is provided,

the feast of friendship is prepared and eaten. "They offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings: and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Verse 6. These last words are supposed by some commentators of note to be descriptive of a scene of extreme lewdness and debauchery. And certain it is, that one of the principal instruments of propagating and supporting idolatry was the attraction of beauty and wantonness, vilely prostituted to decoy strangers into the homage of the impure and worthless deity of the place. That people must be in a dreadful state indeed, among whom religion, the foundation of good morals, the guard of virtue, is employed as a minister to unhallowed pleasure, and a handmaid to vice.

The prevalence of evil practices is a lamentable thing, but the establishment of wrong principles is much worse. The wholesomest stream may be accidentally tainted and polluted, and work itself pure again; but if the fountain be poisonous, nothing but death can flow from it. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James i. 15.

—We are now conveyed from this awful scene of pollution in the valley, to a much more awful scene of meditated vengeance on the mount. While Moses was solacing himself in the pleasing prospect of being soon dispatched to the people of his charge with messages of love; while he was rejoicing in

the important transaction so lately past, confident that all was now settled between God and his people; the joy of this exalted communication is suddenly interrupted by intelligence of a new, unprovoked, and unexpected revolt. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down: for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be the gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Verses 7, 8. An offended God refuses any longer to acknowledge as his, a generation of wretches who had rendered themselves so entirely unworthy of his slightest regard. Justice awakes to a recapitulation of the benefits which they had received, and of the offences which they had committed; and concludes with a resolution totally to consume them. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

In the dialogue which passed upon this occasion, some of the most interesting objects that can be contemplated present themselves to our view.—The condescension of divine friendship. As God would not "hide from Abraham the thing which he was about to do;" would take no step towards the destruction of Sodom till that friend of God had been fully heard in its behalf; and could do nothing till

Lot was departed ; so the same God, rich in mercy, will not arise to vengeance against Israel, till Moses has been consulted, and has acquiesced in the sentence. O the wonderful power of faith and prayer! Moses is represented as possessing a constraining power over Omnipotence, the anger of Jehovah-refuses to burn till his permission is obtained. O the wonderful grace and condescension of the most high God! Thus is justice ever tempered with mercy: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Lam. iii. 22.

A proposal is made to Moses,—and what is too hard for the Lord to perform?—which a selfish heart would eagerly have grasped at, "I will make of thee," says God, "a great nation." But selfishness in this truly great man was controlled by much nobler and more generous principles; zeal for the honour of God, and compassion for a devoted people.

The intercessory address of Moses is a masterpiece of eloquence, and discovers a soul superior to all regards but such as are worthy of a prophet, a hero, a patriot, and, what is superior to all, the friend of God. "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains,

“and to consume them from the face of the earth?
“Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this
“evil against thy people. Remember Abraham,
“Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou
“swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them,
“I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven,
“and all this land that I have spoken of will I give
“unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.”

Verses 11—13. The holy man of God is concerned not only that the Judge of all the earth should do right, but that the divine conduct should stand vindicated in the eyes of the heathen. He proposes to himself the same end which Jehovah himself has in view, in all that he does—the glory of his great name. He nobly prefers the fulfilling of the ancient covenant with his venerable ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the establishment of a new covenant with himself and his seed. He is willing to decrease, willing that his family continue obscure, that his head be laid low, provided the Lord be magnified and Israel saved. This is a greatness of mind which religion alone could inspire. Like a true son of Israel he wrestles and makes supplication; and as a prince he too has power with God and prevails,—if not to prevent every expression of displeasure, at least to prevent the execution of the general doom. Having obtained this great point, he descends with haste from the mount, bearing in his hand the most precious work of art that skill ever executed. Who does not shudder at

the thought of its having been destroyed? "And
"Moses turned, and went down from the mount,
"and the two tables of the testimony were in his
"hand: the tables were written on both their sides;
"on the one side and on the other were they written.
"And the tables were the work of God, and the
"writing was the writing of God, graven upon the
"tables." Verses 15, 16. But why should we re-
gret that a piece of curious workmanship, in dumb
matter, was destroyed? That loss soon might be,
and soon was repaired. Alas! we behold a more
shocking spectacle every day—a race of thoughtless
wretches deliberately, presumptuously defacing
God's image, destroying his signature, engraved
"not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of
"the heart;" inflicting on themselves a loss never to
be repaired, not in a holy zeal, but in a paroxysm of
diabolical frenzy.

Moses might destroy the tablets, but the spirit
of the writing he could not disannul. When all
sensible monuments are dissolved, the law main-
tains its adamantine solidity, its uncontaminated
purity, its unpliant steadiness, its unbending dig-
nity. The tablets were written on both sides,
within and without. Every fragment therefore had
some part of the law and testimony written upon it.
Thus, in every particle of the human frame, there
are self-evident traces of the finger of God—the un-
derstanding, the heart, the conscience, the memory,
—in shivers, indeed, mutilated, defaced, but capable
of being repaired and united.

But I find it impossible to collect into one efficient point of view the sequel of this eventful history, within the limits of one discourse. Here therefore we set up another resting place, and from it take a cursory view of the ground over which we have travelled.

I. What a melancholy view presents itself, of the corruption, the degeneracy, and degradation of human nature. Behold a people lost to every noble, generous, manly principle: restrained by no law, awed by no threatening, susceptible of no endearment, influenced by neither shame nor gratitude; boldly overleaping the bounds of reason and religion—and in that people behold “the carnal mind, which is enmity against God: which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Behold, “the wickedness of man, how great it is in the earth; and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, how it is only evil continually.” Think not, however, O man, that thou art surveying a distant prospect, or travelling through a foreign land. Think not that these Israelites are sinners above all the men of the earth. When thou hast thoroughly searched and known thyself, no account of human frailty will appear exaggerated. They framed and worshipped a golden image. How many myriads hourly bend the knee to the same idol, changed only a little in form! See the temple of Mammon, how it is crowded. His votaries, see how much in earnest they are in their devotions. Early and late the incense ascends. Neither Jewish

nor Christian sabbath interrupts their attendance, or cools their ardour; while truth, and justice, and mercy, and the love of God, are offered a perpetual sacrifice to the insatiate demon, who never says, "It is enough." Nor think that gold is the only deity which men adore. On searching into thy own bosom, some lurking imp, of different form, complexion, and texture will be found; hid in close disguise, unknown indeed of men, but to the eye of God and conscience clearly confessed. Down with it; it is thy dishonour, and it threatens thy ruin.

II. Rejoice with trembling, while you contemplate the affecting prospect which opens of the severity and mercy of the great God—the severity, which by the hand of Levi cut off three thousand of the offenders, in the heat of their offence; which threatened to exterminate the whole race, and which, in "the day of visitation, visited their sin upon them:"—the mercy which relented, which pitied and spared the guilty, which listened to the voice of intercession, and accepted the atonement. Thou thyself, O sinner, art a monument of both the one and the other. Thy life is forfeited to justice; thou art daily enduring the punishment of thy transgressions; thou standest continually exposed to severer ills than any thou hast yet felt, and far beyond what fear itself can figure. Yet mercy suffers thee to live; there is hope concerning thee; the glad tidings of salvation are in thine ears; "behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the

"sins of the world!" Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" "Wherefore, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor: it may be" more than "a lengthening of thy tranquillity," it may prevent eternal misery.

III. Behold a greater than Moses is here—an Intercessor more compassionate, more earnest, more powerful: "a Prince with God" who ever prevails; a Propitiation ever meritorious and successful; "blood that cleanseth from all sin." "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John ii. 1, 2. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Heb. v. 7—9. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to

"be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us
"by them that heard him?" Heb. ii. 1—3.

IV. Let us look forward to "that great and notable day of the Lord," when the law which was delivered audibly from Sinai, which Moses with a rash, inconsiderate hand could break in pieces, but was unable to repair, shall be restored in all its purity and perfection; shall be engraved on every heart, and become legible to every eye; when the hidden glory of the legal dispensation shall be unveiled, and the greater glory of the GOSPEL displayed: when the divine image shall be again impressed on the soul of man in all its beauty and exactness—and we ourselves, degraded and lost as we are, shall "be raised together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"—and "beholding with open face as in a glass the glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

LECTURE IV.

EXODUS XXXIII. 8—11.

And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent-door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle. And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses, and all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle-door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent-door. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.

GUILT is the parent of fear and suspicion; conscious innocence and integrity inspire confidence and tranquillity. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion." Prov. xxviii. 1. "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden." Gen. iii. 8. Moses ascends undaunted to meet the Lord, into the midst of tempest and fire. Behold the height of Heaven, how great it is! What so distant as the Creator and a fallen creature! But lo, the distance is done away; and what is so intimately near as a God reconciled and a fallen creature restored! Jehovah descending in mercy and grace, the soul arising, upborne on the wings of faith and love, must meet and unite, whether on the mount or in the tabernacle, in the

temple or in the closet. "The secret of the Lord
"is with them that fear him: and he will show
"them his covenant." Ps. xxv. 14. We have
heard of Abraham, who was called the *friend* of
God; and we behold a communication of the same
distinguished honour, to that illustrious son of Abra-
ham who has instructed and blessed mankind
by transmitting the history of this sacred friend-
ship to the latest generations of the world. We see
it still expressed in the same manner; on the part
of Moses by humble submission, holy zeal and
importunity, and child-like freedom and confidence:
on the part of God, by the most unreserved com-
munication of his intentions, the most endearing
expressions of affection and good will.

The history delivered in the preceding chapter
of this book exhibited the blessed communion on
the mount, suddenly interrupted by the dreadful
scene of madness and rebellion in the plain beneath.
Behold all Israel eating and drinking, dancing and
playing, before a dumb idol, the similitude of a
brute beast. Behold "a covenant with hell" rati-
fied by the same dread solemnities which had been
so recently employed to join a great nation in alli-
ance with the God of Heaven. The law which the
plastic hand of Omnipotence had impressed on the
soul of man in its very constitution; the law which
he lately had condescended distinctly to pronounce
in the trembling ears of all Israel; that law he had
still farther condescended, with exquisite art and
skill, by his own finger, to engrave on two tablets
of stone, for perpetual preservation. Moses descend-

ing in haste, with this precious record in his hand, perceives at a distance the disorder which raged in the camp, and in a transport of indignation dashes the tablets on the ground, and breaks them in pieces. The motive was good and commendable, but the action was rash and presumptuous. We find, however, no expression of anger against that rashness; the frailty is lost and overlooked in approbation of the principle which led to it. But had not Moses punishment sufficient for his hasty conduct, in the irreparable loss occasioned by it to himself and to the world? There was no occasion to chide him; his own conscience must have smitten him sufficiently, as often as he reflected on what, in the moment of impatience, he had done.

Without inflicting positive chastisement, a righteous God can easily reprove men, by making them to feel the native consequences of their own folly; and of all the infirmities to which our nature is subject, anger most certainly and most severely punishes itself.

The man who is thus animated with zeal for the glory of God has forgotten what fear is. Aaron, under the influence of the fear of man, yielded to the popular frenzy, and fabricated the golden calf; Moses, inspired with the fear of God, defies and despises the multitude, consumes their idol in the fire, and grinds it to powder. This is that Moses of whom they talked so contemptuously a little while ago. What, not one of the thousands of Israel who worshipped the image of the beast, bold enough to protect his Dagon! No; abashed they stand, and feel "how

"awful goodness is, and see virtue in her own shape
"how lovely."

A most remarkable circumstance is added to the history of the destruction of the idol, which has greatly exercised the ingenuity, learning, and imagination of critics and commentators. Moses took the dust into which he had pounded the calf, and "strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." Verse 20. This seems nothing more than an expression of sovereign contempt, poured upon a most worthless object; and a practical demonstration of the absurdity of idolatry. And it may, perhaps not unwarrantably, be employed as a reproof of the inordinate love of money, that root of all evil. Gold, as an instrument of commerce, as the means of procuring the things that are needful for the body, as a natural production possessed of very singular qualities, may be lawfully sought after and innocently used: but erected into a deity, valued on its own account, swallowing up every other object, engrossing the whole heart, becomes unprofitable and pernicious; as incapable of gratifying the real appetites of a rational being, as gold in its simple state is incapable of satisfying hunger, or mingled with water, of allaying thirst.

An imagination perpetually on the stretch to discover evangelical ideas in every iota of the sacred history, has perceived the method of gospel salvation in this passage of Moses; as if the prophet intended to signify that the Messiah, typified by

the water which issued from the rock in Horeb, could alone purify from the guilt of idolatry, and from all other sin.

Moses having executed just vengeance on the idol itself, turns in holy indignation to his weak and guilty brother, who had so readily fallen into, and abetted, so gross a deviation from all duty and decency. "And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" Verse 21—an anticipated instance of obedience to the apostolic injunction, "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother, but in any ways reprove him." Justice, on the tribunal, knows not a brother in court, but examines the cause. Justice, with the pen of the historian in his hand, knows not blood in recording facts, but declares the truth.—Justice, as the minister of God, must stifle the calls of natural affection, and condemn the guilty. And here again Moses becomes a pattern to all judges and magistrates, to every minister of religion, and to every relater of events. His own faults, and those of his nearest relations, are told with the same artless simplicity as their good qualities and praise-worthy actions. Praise and censure are distributed, with the same candour and impartiality, to his own family and to strangers.

Aaron, formerly an object of condemnation, now sinks into an object of pity; as every man must, in the day when he is called to account, and has no defence to make. "And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the

"people, that they are set on mischief; for they
 "said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before
 "us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought
 "us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what
 "is become of him. And I said unto them, Who-
 "soever hath any gold, let them break it off. So
 "they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and
 "there came out this calf." Verses 22—24.

Alas, alas! What a profusion of words is guilt con-
 strained to employ, in order to cover what it can-
 not extenuate or excuse. What must it be to behold
 a guilty world stand self-condemned before the
 Judge of the quick and the dead! How dreadful must
 it be, to appear in the number of that guilty crowd,
 without being able to escape unnoticed in the crowd!

The scene that follows is one of those from which
 we turn away our eyes in anguish, or which we con-
 template in silent horror and astonishment—Thou-
 sands of criminals falling at once by the hands of
 their brethren!—The sons of Levi, destined to shed
 the blood of many victims, to make atonement for
 the guilty—called to the dreadful ministry of offer-
 ing up part of the guilty themselves, a sacrifice to
 justice, to make atonement for the rest! Mark how
 the courage of one man has roused that of many.
 A whole tribe has fortitude sufficient to follow in a
 cause, wherein not one man was found daring enough
 to profess himself a leader. This is one motive,
 among many, to aim at being singularly good. Mark
 the timidity of conscious guilt. Levi was the least
 numerous of all the tribes; but, engaged in the

cause of God and truth, the myriads of offending Israelites shrink from their attack, or fall down before them. Mark how dreadful is the brow of justice roused to vengeance. "Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother, that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." Verse 29. What a night of horror and remorse must have succeeded a day of impiety, madness, and slaughter! What an awful to-morrow, the day of reckoning, to follow that dismal night!

But the case, though dangerous, is not desperate, while there is a Moses to intercede. Has my offended Father so much tenderness left as to upbraid, to reprove, to chastise me?—His displeasure, though depressing, is not intolerable; but silent anger, resentment that neglects, that shuns, that leaves me to myself, is a burthen too heavy for me to bear. If God vouchsafe to speak to me, though in thunder; to answer me, though from the whirlwind; there is hope concerning me. But if he say within himself, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone," then I am indeed lost and undone.—

The intercession of Moses in behalf of the people now assumes a tone peculiarly earnest and affecting. "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, 'Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.' Verses 31, 32. It is hardly credible that on this

any, a system of piety has been built so refined as to issue in absurdity and contradiction. Moses is here supposed, by interpreters of a certain complexion, to express the utmost readiness to renounce his eternal salvation for what he apprehended to be the greater glory of God, and if it could be the condition of procuring salvation to Israel. Resignation to the divine will, according to them, is imperfect, till a man can cheerfully and deliberately prefer his own everlasting damnation, to all the joys of Heaven, if the higher interests of public good, and the glory of God, can be thereby promoted. This, to some visionary minds, may have a specious appearance of a more sublime piety, but it is both unnatural and unscriptural; and therefore is not piety at all. As it has fallen in my way, and as this text in Moses has been connected with a famous passage in the New Testament of similar import, I will take the liberty to speak at some length, and with much plainness upon the subject, it being a principal object in the plan of these Lectures, to unfold and recommend the religion of the Bible, that is, the religion of good sense, to the neglect of all human systems, and all useless speculations, which have not an obvious foundation in Scripture and reason, and which do not obviously tend to promote human virtue and happiness.

Now we hesitate not a moment to affirm, that the doctrine attempted to be built on the united texts of Moses, and of Paul has not the foundation of the Prophet and of the Apostle to rest upon; and

that it is not calculated to serve any one purpose of religion, wisdom, or virtue. The passage in the New Testament alluded to, is that of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and runs thus: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Rom. ix. 3. It is too well known, to need any proof, that there are in every language, and among all nations of the world, certain modes of expression in common use, which it were unfair to interpret according to the literal import of the words, and which accordingly, if translated into a foreign language, and applied to the modes of thought and expression used in a different age and country, might convey a meaning very different from the original one, perhaps diametrically opposite to it. Is there a man in his senses, who will pretend to assert that Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, one thousand five hundred and fifty years before Christ, affixed the same idea to these words, "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written," Verse 32; which a dogmatical maker of systems in France or England in the eighteenth century thinks proper to affix to them? Is it a certain point, that the apostle Paul and such an one mean precisely the same thing, when the former writes "anathema," and the latter, in the phraseology of his own language, thinks fit to render it by the word "accursed?" In truth, both expressions evidently are figurative, and can be fully

understood only by appealing to the genius of the original languages, the spirit of the men who use them, and the occasion on which they are employed. Moses, in a moment, explains what he understands by "the book which God had written." For what saith the answer of God to this expostulation? "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." Verse 33. And what saith the history? "All that generation died in the wilderness," without being admitted into the land of promise, according to the original destination of Providence, or, as it was "written in God's book." Follow Moses to a similar situation on another occasion, and see how he expresses himself; and let the one passage explain the other. The people became discontented with their food at Tabera, and lusted for the provision of Egypt; God was displeased, and threatened to consume them. Moses, grieved in spirit, thus presumes to expostulate: "And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom (as a nursing-father beareth the sucking child), unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too

"heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me,
 "kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found
 "favour in thy sight; and let me not see my
 "wretchedness." Num. xi, 11—15. The expression,
 "Kill me out of hand," is plainly equivalent to that
 used in Exodus, "Blot me out of the book which
 "thou hast written." What then is the fair mean-
 ing and construction of the words of Moses, "Lord,
 "grant the pardon of this people to the prayers of
 "thy servant;—who would rather submit to ever-
 "lasting misery, than fail to obtain his request?"
 Horrid, blasphemous, absurd! No, but nature,
 piety, and patriotism unite, in saying as he does,
 "Lord, if thy decree against this people may not
 "be reversed; if justice demand their utter exter-
 "mination, let mine eyes be first closed in peace.
 "Subject me not to the cruel mortification of sur-
 "viving all my nation, and of enduring the insults
 "and scorn of our enemies. In mercy take me
 "first out of the world, where I should only lead a
 "life of sorrow and regret, heavier than death it-
 "self." The word *anathema* used by the Apostle
 is of the same import with the Hebrew word חֵרֵם.
 They both denote a person or thing devoted, sepa-
 rated by a vow or curse, one excommunicated and
 separated from society. And his meaning is this:
 "I most solemnly protest, God and my own con-
 "science are my witnesses, that I speak the truth
 "as it is in my heart; the infidelity of my coun-
 "trymen after the flesh is a matter of the deepest

"concern and regret to me :—to such a degree, that
 "if it could be the means of curing their prejudices,
 "and of bringing them to Christ the Redeemer, I
 "care not in what estimation I might be held in the
 "church. Let me cease to be an apostle, let me
 "be as one cut off from the society of the faithful
 "for some atrocious crime; let me be vile and con-
 "temptible in the eyes of the world; let but the
 "Israel of God be gathered to the Redeemer, and
 "brought within the bond of the covenant of grace."

Moreover, Paul does not directly form even this
 wish; but conditionally, "I could wish," were it
 lawful for me to form such a wish, and if the grant-
 ing it could any way contribute to the accomplish-
 ment of a purpose so desirable.

The sentiment, then, of those mystics has no
 warrant either in language, or in the spirit of any
 of the persons whom God has proposed to us as
 patterns in Scripture.

Besides their being unscriptural, what can be
 more extravagant and unnatural, than those ranting
 expressions of one of that order: (*Angèle de Fo-*
ligni, Evêque de Meaux Instruct. Pastor. Page 341.)
 "Though I were sure of being condemned to hell,
 "I would not cease from my penitential acts, and
 "from depriving myself of all comforts for the love
 "of God? If I am to be cast into hell, O my
 "God, stay no longer, make haste, and since thou
 "hast forsaken me, finish thy work, precipitate me
 "into the bottomless pit." *Catharine of Sienna*
thinks fit to express herself thus on the same subject :

“ Though it were possible to feel all the torments
“ of devils and damned souls, yet should I never
“ call them pains, so much pleasure would the pure
“ love of God make me to find therein.” These
are evidently the idle speculations of persons too
much at their ease, whom one hour of exquisite
torment would bring to their senses, and teach them
a sounder divinity. What is the foundation of our
love to God? His love to us; the good which he
has done to us, and that which we still expect from
him. I feel it impossible for me to love one whose
interest or caprice require that I should be tor-
mented everlastingly. I love the Lord because he
hath delivered me from the curse of the law; because
he hath saved me from going down to the pit; because
he “ hath raised us up together, and made us sit
“ together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Eph.
ii. 6.

Moses by entreaty obtains a short reprieve for the
offenders; but a plain intimation is given that they
should not pass wholly unpunished. “ In the day
“ when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.”
Verse 34. The meaning of this threatening is fully
explained in the sequel. All that generation of men
were blotted out of the book of the living; their
carcasses fell gradually in the wilderness; they were
not permitted to see the good land promised to their
fathers; plague upon plague overtook them, till they
were consumed for their idolatry; of the worshippers
of the golden calf not ~~one~~ entered into Canaan.

God had hitherto condescended to conduct and

defend Israel, in that wonderful symbol of his presence, the pillar of cloud and fire. Provoked by their rebellion, their Protector and Guide withdraws from them, and they are left to pursue their march through paths of their own choosing. The adage says, "Whom God means to destroy, he first infatuates." Had it run more simply, "Whom God means to destroy, he first forsakes," it had been juster and more consonant to the tenour of Scripture. When Jehovah has withdrawn as a friend, he is not far off as an enemy. But what must it have been to one who felt like Moses, to be commanded to proceed to the conquest of Canaan, destitute of the presence and support of God, the glory and the strength of Israel? It was like sending a ship into a tempestuous ocean without ballast, without a mast or sail, without a rudder or compass, to be driven at the mercy of every blast; and laid under the necessity of sinking in the mighty deep. Moses apprehends the full extent of an attempt so perilous, and deprecates it with all the energy of supplication. He apprehends no ill save one, that of being deserted of God. He trembles at no foe, but their best friend estranged.

The wretched multitude now see their nakedness, and are ashamed. In vain do gold and jewels attempt to hide the deformity of a soul that has lost its innocence. They were not more eager, the other day, to contribute their ornaments to the formation of an idol, than they are now to hide them out of sight, as the monuments of their dishonour. "What

“fruit have they now in those things, whereof they are ashamed?” A face of mourning is seen over the whole camp, and every face is clothed with despair. Directions are given to remove the tabernacle without the camp. A few who had continued faithful adhere to that divine instrument of protection, and follow it. The cloudy pillar which, during the period of riot, sedition, and revolt, had in wrath departed, returned to its destined residence, the tabernacle. In the eyes of astonished Israel, Moses enters undismayed into that mansion of divine glory, proceeds to meet God, as a man to meet his friend; renews the conference in the plain which had been broken off on the mount. The result is, God graciously relents, being mindful of his covenant, and again undertakes the safe conduct of his people: “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest,” Chap. xxxiii. 14; and all again is peace.—And thus conclude the controversies between disobedient and gainsaying children, and their tender-hearted, relenting Father. He is not to be “overcome of evil, but overcomes evil with good.”

But what is this I hear? Moses soliciting for still farther manifestations of the divine perfections? Who had seen, who had heard, who had felt and enjoyed so much of God as he? And yet still he is importunately entreating, “Lord, show me thy glory.” O my friends, How many things of God do “angels still desire to look into?” There is “a breadth, and length, and depth, and height, in the love of

“ Christ, which passeth knowledge.” The response of the Oracle to this request is not less extraordinary than the request itself: “ And he said, I will
 “ make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will
 “ proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and
 “ will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and
 “ will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.
 “ And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there
 “ shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said,
 “ Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt
 “ stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass,
 “ while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in
 “ a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my
 “ hand, while I pass by. And I will take away
 “ mine hand, and thou shalt see my back-parts:
 “ but my face shall not be seen.” Chap. xxxiii.
 19—23. This opens a field of meditation too ample to be now entered upon. Let it be reserved for the entire ground of another evening’s excursion into the region of Scripture: and let us contemplate with wonder the scene which has just passed before our eyes.

Does the whole story seem to any one incredible? Let the horrid scene which this great metropolis exhibited, not many years ago (June 1780), arise upon his recollection. Let him think on the frenzy which, like a mighty torrent, carried every thing before it; which fired the city, overawed the senate, and threatened the dissolution of all regular government. Who can tell the dire effects which desperate enthusiasm, suddenly bursting out, and excit-

ing universal terror and consternation; may produce? Had we not seen it with our eyes, we could scarcely have believed that consequences so momentous should have issued from a source so contemptible. The resolutions and operations of a lawless multitude are truly formidable. Unopposed, they rush on as an overflowing flood; resisted, they melt away, they are scattered like chaff driven by the wind.

Observe, my friend, how the most difficult lessons of religion, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness, are taught thee by the example of the great Jehovah himself. Darest thou to think of taking vengeance for a petty, a misconceived, an imaginary offence, when thou beholdest the most glorious of all beings passing by, blotting out the most heinous, the most unprovoked insults, and when thou hearest him proclaiming his name, "The LORD, the LORD God merciful, and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin?" "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Rom. xii. 19—21. "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them

“ which despitefully use you, and persecute you :
“ that ye may be the children of your Father which
“ is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the
“ evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just
“ and on the unjust.” Matt. v. 44, 45.

“ Follow on to know the Lord.” Expatriate in Nature’s ample field ; and you will find profit and instruction blended with delight. Explore the wonders of eternal Providence, and you will see constant cause to rejoice in the thought that there is a GOD who judgeth and ruleth in the earth. Dive deeper and deeper into those mysteries of Grace which “ angels desire to look into,” and break forth into songs of joy, that “ GOD is love.” “ This is “ life eternal, that they might know thee, the only “ true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” John xvii. 3. Now, “ we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is “ come, then that which is in part shall be done “ away.” 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

Nature now presents in every plant, in every pebble, mysteries that defy the researches of the wisest and most acute ; then “ the wayfaring man, “ though a fool,” shall comprehend systems the vastest, most complex, most abstruse. Providence now exhibits an apparent inconsistency and disorder, which confounds the reasoning pride of man ; then, God will fully vindicate his ways to man, obviate every difficulty, resolve every doubt, remove every scruple. In scripture “ are some things hard to be “ understood,” in our present state of ignorance and

imperfection; then, the veil shall be removed, and “we shall see face to face,”—“then shall we know even as also we are known.” Then the promised Spirit of wisdom and revelation shall “teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance.” Then, shall he “open” our “understanding,” that we may “understand the scriptures.” “Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

LECTURE V.

EXODUS XXXIII. 13.

And he said, *I beseech thee, show me thy Glory.*

THE greater progress that any one has made in science, the deeper must be his conviction of his own ignorance and imperfection; and the higher our attainments in religion, the stronger is the impression of our infinite distance from God. A little knowledge puffeth up; but modesty and humility are the constant attendants on profound wisdom. Thoughtless men make light of the name, the house, the day of God; but angels "cover their faces with their wings," when they approach his awful presence. Human friendship admits of freedom and familiarity; but while the great Jehovah condescends to "dwell with man upon earth, even with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit;" he permits us not to forget, that he is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy." Are we elevated as on eagles' wings, up to the eternal throne? It is only that we may feel the hand which supports our flight, and discern our own darkness by that "light which is inaccessible and full of glory." Abraham, the friend of God, in the highest intimacy of that honourable character, loses not for a moment the sense of his distance

and dependence; "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." Gen. xviii. 26. "O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once." A voice from Heaven reaches his ears, saying, "Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Gen. xv. 1. And that instant we behold him prostrate, with his face to the ground. Moses, the friend of God, to whom Jehovah revealed more of himself than to any other man, is still but in the outer court of the habitation where God dwells. What he knows has only created a thirst for knowledge; what he has seen has but inspired an earnest desire of seeing more and more; and after communications so ample, and communion so sweet, this is still his desire, this his request, "Lord, show me thy glory."

From the reiterated rebellions and provocations of Israel this good has resulted—New, endearing, encouraging discoveries have been made of the divine nature, perfections, and will. Mankind, to the latest generations, have been instructed to revere that justice which "will by no means clear the guilty," and to triumph in that mercy which "forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin." The revolt of the people cemented and improved the union between God and their leader.

Joshua, the son of Nun, who was destined to make so distinguished a figure, and to act a part so conspicuous and important in the history of Israel, is represented as trained up from his youth in the

service of Moses, and in communion with God. We find him in the mount with his master when he went to receive the written law, while the multitude below were polluting themselves with idols. We find him entering with his master into the tabernacle, when it was removed out of the camp, and the glory of the Lord overshadowed it; and there he remained, while Moses returned to confer with the people. Early habits of acquaintance with God, and employment in his service, are youth's best security and preservative against sin, and the surest foundation of honour and usefulness, of distinction and comfort, in advanced age. A man must be formed to command by obeying. "Joshua, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle." Verse 11. What a severe reproof of that spirit of profligacy and dissipation, that criminal love of pleasure and coldness to intellectual attainments, that irreligion and profanity which characterize youth in general!

It is pleasing to look forward to this good man's latter end, and to observe a career of glory supported and adorned by piety; a youth of seriousness, fidelity, and obedience, ripening into an advanced life of reputation and usefulness; declining into an old age of tranquillity, vigour, and joy; and closing in the well-grounded hope of immortality. Joshua was trained for the camp, in the tabernacle, and on the mount, and was prepared to be the great general and statesman, by learning first to be the humble saint and faithful minister.

The characters of Moses and of Joshua delight-

fully illustrate and embellish each other. Moses knew from the beginning that this young man was to be his successor in office; that he was to finish the work which himself had begun; was to have the glory of conquering Canaan, and of establishing Israel there, according to the promises. An ordinary mind would have marked the progress of this growing rival with jealousy; would have attempted to obstruct his advancement; would have repined at the preference given him, to the neglect of his own family. But every selfish, every domestic consideration gives way to the rising merits of Joshua, and to the choice and appointment of Heaven. It was equally natural, on the other hand, for a young man like Joshua, who knew that he was destined to rule, to surpass his master, to reach the highest summit of human grandeur; it was natural for such an one to become impatient of authority, to be weary of restraint, to be eager to bring himself forward, and to make himself conspicuous: But the son of Nun discovers true magnanimity in cheerfully yielding the subjection becoming an inferior; in observing Moses, and learning of him; in patiently waiting for the time and manner which Providence should choose of exalting him to honour. Moses treats him, and speaks of him, as of a favourite son, rising into eminence and distinction; he behaves to Moses as to a beloved parent, crowned with years and honour, which he hopes to see him long enjoy. These are lessons not taught in the school of the world, where natural affection, decency,

and discretion are daily sacrificed on the altar of pride, selfishness, avarice, and ambition.

Moses has, by importunity, prevailed that the usual symbol of the divine presence should continue to lead and protect Israel, by the way in which they went to the promised land. In answer to the prayer of faith, it is thus promised, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Verse 14. His spirit is now therefore tranquillised with respect to the people of his charge. God is yet again "for them, and who can be against them?" But his personal acquaintance with God seems only to be beginning. As if he had seen nothing of the divine glory in the bush at Horeb, which burned, but was not consumed; as if the awful glories of Sinai had been nothing; as if God had not spoken to him in the tabernacle of the congregation, face to face, "as a man to his friend;" he continues to entreat, "Lord, show me thy glory!" My friends, if you can rest satisfied with what you know of God, it is a melancholy proof that you know him not. Eternity is too short, the capacity of an angel too limited, to "find out the Almighty unto perfection."

What a field of discovery does the vast frame of NATURE present! Supposing, O man, thy duration sufficiently extended, thy understanding sufficiently enlarged, and opportunity afforded thee equal to thy utmost wish, when couldst thou have made a complete survey of the little globe wherein we dwell; when couldst thou have explored the innumerable secret wonders of the hoary deep; when

examined the precious contents of the everlasting hills; when discovered the nature and properties of air and fire? Supposing the mighty task performed; supposing the untried regions of the air, the untrodden paths of the sea, the deep and the high places of the earth rendered accessible to thy approach, laid fully open to thy view—and lo, the race of knowledge is but beginning. Behold another orb at hand, presenting a new world of wonders; an orb, possessing an inconceivably greater extent than our earth, containing an infinitely greater variety of objects, answering a much nobler end in the scale of being; and after that, another; and another still, in endless succession. Suppose the whole planetary system, in order, to have passed under review, the mind rests not there; the wonders of Divine Power and Wisdom end not then; the soul wings its way to other systems, lighted by other suns, and finds itself but entering on the glorious career.

Were the whole expanse of Nature explored, the MORAL government of God, over all these spheres, and all that they contain, expands the same vast field afresh to the astonished eye, and invites to a second excursion. When that is performed, REDEEMING LOVE, ALMIGHTY GRACE display the ample theatre a third time, and lead us by the hand through the “nations of them that are saved,” and point out the successive triumphs of sovereign goodness. As if it were possible to see an end of all this glo-

rious perfection, Scripture announces the dissolution of all these things, as a space too small for the soul to expatiate in, as an object too mean for its contemplation; and promises a new and more glorious system of things, suited to its endless duration and exalted powers, “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” And what is it, even then, that men behold? The works of God, not God himself; the writing, not the hand that writes; the palace that is inhabited, not the divine inhabitant; the emanation, not the essence of his glory. Every gracious spirit, then, will with Moses be “following on to know the Lord;” still and ever inquiring, still and ever imploring, “Lord, show me thy glory.”

The answer of God to this request is not less remarkable than the request itself. Moses prayed, saying, “Lord, show me thy glory.” Alas! like the disciple on the mount of transfiguration, “he knew not what he said.” To have been answered according to the letter of his desire had been fatal to him; for what created eye can behold the glory of God, and live? But a gracious God returns an answer suitable to the condition of his servant, “And he said, I will make all my GOODNESS pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” Verse 19. **This** is the glory of God to man, the riches of his grace, the glory of his goodness, the wonders of his love.

In a display of the most striking imagery, God points out to Moses what was weak, ignorant, and presumptuous in his petition, and commends what is pious, dutiful, and affectionate. “And he said, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no “man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Be- “hold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand “upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while “my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a “cleft of the rock; and I will cover thee with my “hand, while I pass by. And I will take away “mine hand, and thou shalt see my back-parts: “but my face shall not be seen.” Verses 20—23. Expressions plainly importing, that by creatures such as we are, the great Jehovah can be seen and known only from those tokens of his presence which he leaves behind him. He comes upon us as it were imperceptibly, unveils his glory for a moment, in his word, in his ordinances, but his hand is upon our eyes. As he departs, he permits us to look up, and to know by infallible marks, that he has been with us. Thus Jacob’s vision at Bethel was over before he was aware into what glorious company he had been introduced. “And Jacob awaked out of “his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this “place; and I knew it not.” Genesis xxviii. 16. Thus at Peniel he wrestled apparently with a man; but in departing, his divine antagonist, by a touch, convinced him who he was; and he discovers, that he had seen “the visions of the Almighty,” after he

had withdrawn. And thus the glorified Redeemer talked with the two disciples by the way, as they went to Emmaus, and opened unto them the Scriptures, while their heart burned within them, but their eyes were held that they did not know him. At length, while he brake bread and blessed it, "their eyes were opened, and they knew him."—Is God in this place? We see him not; we cannot see him and live; but by this we shall know it hereafter—Has his word been made quick and powerful to any soul? Has the dignity and importance of communion with him been felt? Is a man departing with a deeper and more humbling sense of his own unworthiness and guilt; and penetrated with a more lively apprehension of the mercy of God through a Saviour? Is sin rendered more odious, and holiness more amiable in the eyes of any one? Is the heart glowing with desire to know more of God, to love him more, and to serve him better? Is the spirit of a man pressing "toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?" Phil. iii. 14. Then of truth God is in this place; and a day spent thus in his courts is better than a thousand.

But how is the language of this concluding passage of the chapter to be reconciled with that in the eleventh verse?—"The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." The expression, "to see the face," is evidently taken in two different senses. In the 11th verse, it signifies, to be regarded with favour or approbation, as it is

in the 4th Psalm, verse 6. "Lord, lift thou up
"the light of thy countenance upon us;" that is,
show thyself gracious unto us, for we prize thy
loving-kindness far above every earthly blessing:
but in the 20th and 23d verses, "to see the face of
"God," imports the knowledge of his nature or
essence, which to a creature is impossible. Here
even a Moses is in darkness, through an excess of
light; into this angels desire to look, but instantly
shrink back, and shut their trembling eyes. But
"the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of
"the Father, he hath declared him." John i. 18.
And "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among
"us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the
"only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and
"truth." John i. 14. Such was the care employed
by him who knows what is in man, to prevent the
possibility of idolatry, and to expose the folly of it.
Even Moses shall not be trusted with any thing like
a representation of Deity; and what so absurd as to
frame a similitude of what never was, never can be
seen?

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man
"availeth much," says the apostle James; and what
a notable instance have we of the truth of this in
the passage before us! Moses rises in his demands,
as he succeeds by supplicating, and he still prevails.
First, he pleads that the presence of God, the light
and glory of Israel, might not be withdrawn, as
was threatened, but might accompany and lead them
to their destined habitation. And lo! God grants

his request, with an assurance of peculiar regard and affection to himself: "Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." Verse 17. Upon this he presumes to ask some new, some special manifestation of the divine glory, for his own satisfaction and comfort. This too he obtains, in a promise that the goodness of God, *all* his goodness, should be made to pass before him. Emboldened by this success, he cannot rest till he has obtained for the people a remission of their offence. "And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us, (for it is a stiff-necked people,) and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." Ch. xxxiv. 9. And behold he carries this point also, and the covenant is renewed between God and Israel. Let us see that our requests be proper to be granted, and we have them already, before we make them. Let us be solicitous to obtain spiritual blessings in the first place, and the temporal good things which we prized not, asked not, may perhaps come unexpected, unsought. "Give thy servant," said Solomon, "an understanding heart, that I may discern between good and bad." "And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold I

“ have done according to thy words : lo, I have
“ given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so
“ that there was none like thee before thee, neither
“ after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I
“ have also given thee that which thou hast not
“ asked, both riches and honour : so that there shall
“ not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy
“ days.” 1 Kings iii. 10—13.

To enjoy this heavenly vision of *all* God's goodness, as it passed by, Moses must again ascend the mount, and draw nigh unto God. He was going up as to meet a friend ; but that Almighty Friend must protect him from himself, as from his most formidable enemy. “ While my glory passeth by,
“ I will put thee in a cleft of the rock ; and will
“ cover thee with my hand, while I pass by.” Verse 22. An inspired apostle tells us that “ this rock
“ was Christ.” 1 Cor. x. 4. And it sheds a pleasing light on the subject. What afforded safety to Moses in the tremendous hour, when the glory of God appeared ? A cleft of that rock from whence the living stream issued forth for the refreshment of God's heritage when it was weary, and which was the type of that wonderful “ *Man* ” who is “ an
“ hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the
“ tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place ; as the
“ shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Isaiah xxxii. 2. Did Moses flee thither for shelter, did he foresee his danger, and provide a covering for his defenceless head ? No, the refuge was of God's providing. “ I will put thee in a cleft of the rock.”

cumstance is great and affecting, but altogether suitable to the glory that followed: for “the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.” Ch. xxxiv. 5. At the inauguration of kings it is customary to proclaim their name and titles, and to bid defiance to every challenger or usurper of their rights. This is the mere pride of state, the mere insolence of possession. But the names of God are his nature, peculiar to himself, inapplicable, incommunicable to any other. And mark how the tide of mercy flows and swells till it has overcome every barrier; from “the soles of the feet to the ancles, from the ancles to the knees, till it becomes a river, wherein a man may swim;” and from an overflowing river converted into a boundless ocean, without bottom, without shore. “The LORD, the LORD God merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin;” Ch. xxxiv. 6, 7; while justice is confined in one steady, deep, awful stream, threatening destruction only to the impenitent and unbelieving; expressed in these tremendous words; “and that will by no means clear the guilty.”

This was the commencement of an interview “which lasted forty days and forty nights,” and which contained a repetition of the instructions formerly given respecting the tabernacle and its service. But this merits a separate and distinct consi-

deration ; as likewise does the alteration of the external appearance of Moses, on coming down from the mount ; of which we mean to discourse next Lord's Day. " Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone, while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him." Ch. xxxiv. 29, 30.

LECTURE VI.

EXODUS XXXIV. 29, 30.

And it came to pass when Moses came down from mount Sinai, (with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount,) that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone, while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him.

THE sun, the great light of the natural world, communicates to all bodies a portion of his own splendour, and thereby confers upon them whatever lustre they possess. In his absence all things assume the same dismal, sable hue. The verdure of the meadow ; the varied glory of the garden ; the brightness of the moon's resplendent orb ; the sweet attractions of " the human face divine," pronounce, in so many different forms of expression, " The light of yonder celestial globe has arisen upon me : if I have any beauty or loveliness, with him it comes and with him it departs." The whole order and system of nature is designed to be a constant witness to the God of grace—" the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." If there be in angels any beauty of holiness, any fervour of love, any elevation of wisdom, any excellency of strength ; if there be in

man any bowels of mercies, any kind of affection, any gentleness of spirit, any endearment of charity, any humbleness of mind, any meekness, patience, long-suffering, it is a glory reflected from "the Father of lights." It neither exists nor can be seen, but as it is supplied and discovered by the eternal Source of light and joy. Say to that tulip, at the gloomy solstice of the year, or at the dusky midnight hour, "Array thyself in all those beautiful tints of thine wherewith thou charnest the eye of every beholder," it hears thee not, it exhibits no colour but one. But with the return of the vernal breeze and the genial influence of the sun, and the moment the dawn has arisen upon it, unbidden, unobserved, it puts on its beautiful garments, and stands instantly clothed in all the freshness of the spring. Why is that face clouded with sorrow, why grovels that spirit in the dust, why lacks that heart the glow of benevolence, the meltings of sympathy? The genial current of the soul is frozen up, it is the dreary winter season of grace. The sun, the Sun of Righteousness has withdrawn; but, lo, after a little while, the winter is past, cheerful spring returns, the voice of joy and gladness is heard, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Isaiah lx. 1.

We naturally assume the tone of those with whom we frequently converse, and whom we dearly love. "He who walketh with wise men shall become wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." At the social, friendly banquet, the eye sparkles with delight, the heart expands, the brow

is smoothed, the tongue is inspired by the law of kindness ; every look is the reception or communication of pleasure. In the house of mourning, we speedily feel ourselves in unison with the afflicted ; our eyes stand corrected, our words are few, our heads droop.—In the cell of melancholy, the blood runs cold, the features relax, our powers of thought and reflection are suspended, with those of the moping wretches whose misery we deplore. What wonder then if Moses descending from the mount, after forty days' familiar intercourse with " the Lord " " God merciful and gracious," had not the appearance of an ordinary man ; that he had acquired a lustre not his own ! " He was there with the Lord " " forty days and forty nights ; he did neither eat " " bread nor drink water." Ch. xxxiv. 28.

What a sublime idea does this suggest of communion with God ! What created enjoyment has not lost its relish in a much better space ! What powers of unassisted nature could have so long sustained the want of aliment ! No one thing in a more humiliating manner teaches us our frailty and dependence, than the constant necessity of recurring to the grosser elements for support. Man, the lord of this lower world, must, with the subject tribes, and in a much greater proportion than many of them, pass a very considerable portion of his existence in a state of unconsciousness and sensibility during the hours of sleep : he must purchase with the suspension of his reason, during a third part of his being, the exercise of it during the other two. The happiness of an immortal being is, oftener, than once

in a day, subjected to a little bread that perisheth ; the spirit, however willing, quickly feels the oppressive weight of a body frail and infirm. But behold the triumph of the spirit over the flesh ; or rather behold the power and grace of God, which vouchsafing in general to employ means, call upon us diligently to use them ; but which, sometimes neglecting these, and conveying immediate supplies and support, lead us at once to him who “ worketh “ all things after the counsel of his own will.”

Moses descends, not with impaired, but with recruited strength ; strength, which to the end of life never more abated ; not with a sunk, darkened, extinguished eye ; but with an eye which, having seen God, never afterwards became dim ; not with a visage pale and emaciated from a fast of forty days, but with a countenance that dazzled the eyes of every beholder. What a glorious creature is the friend of God ! “ Lo, O Lord, they that are far from thee “ shall perish, but it is good for me to draw nigh “ unto God.” When Moses descended before, he was clothed in just resentment and displeasure ; he came a minister of vengeance, and all Israel trembled as he frowned ; he now returns with the covenant renewed, with the tables of the law restored ; he comes a messenger of peace, and yet the lustre of his appearance is intolerable. What must the great JEHOVAH be in his own glory, when reflected, imparted glory—glory communicated to a creature, thus intimidates and astonishes ! How dreadful the glory of wrath and fiery indignation, when the glory

of infinite goodness we are not able steadfastly to behold !

Moses descended the first time with the tables in their original state, altogether of God ; and in his haste he effaced and destroyed them : but we read of no attempt to collect the scattered fragments, and to re-unite them. Superstition might have made an improper use of what could not be distinctly read, and of consequence but partially understood ; and true piety will seek some surer rule of faith and conduct, some more powerful assistant in devotion, than the scattered shivers of even a sapphire from the throne of God. It has been woefully demonstrated to be an easy matter to mar the work of God. Adam defaced the divine image in his own person, by one wilful transgression. Moses cancelled the hand-writing of ordinances in one rash moment : and every thoughtless transgressor is pulling down, in his own person, a fabric of God's rearing. But all the powers of Nature united are incapable of rebuilding that temple, of renewing that writing, of restoring that image. He, who in the beginning " commanded light to shine out of darkness," alone can relumine the extinguished life of God in the soul. The hand which first created man out of the " dust of the ground," alone can form of the dead in trespasses and sins " a new creature in " Christ " Jesus unto good works." And what was afterwards laid up in the holy place, and preserved while the tabernacle remained ? Not that which came pure and perfect from the hands of the Creator, but

that which God, by an act of grace and the intervention of a Mediator, recovered. Thus "the general assembly and church of the first-born written in Heaven," is not composed of men that never "left their first estate," but of "just men *made* perfect;" not of creatures like Adam in a state of innocence, but of creatures redeemed by the blood of the Son of God; "justified by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and sanctified by the Spirit of the living God. Let us not then regret the loss of an earthly paradise, nor the destruction of the image of a changeable, though perfect creature, while, through grace, we may regain the paradise of God, and be fashioned in body and in spirit like unto our glorious Redeemer.

Moses has acquired a glory on the mount, which he is not conscious of. "He wist not that the skin of his face shone, while he talked with him." Verse 29. The choicest of God's gifts, and humility is one of the most precious, come not with observation, announce not their approach, are not first visible to the possessor. But it is impossible to converse much with God, without appearing more glorious in the eyes of men. Has a man been in the mount with God? He needeth not to sound a trumpet before him, to proclaim from whence he has come; he has but to show himself, and the evidence of it will appear. That man has been in the mount with God. What are the signs of it? Is he ostentatious, self-sufficient? Is he eager to talk of his attainments, to exhibit the shining of his face

to abash and confound a less favoured brother? He is not like Moses, he has not been with the God of Moses, his pretensions are vain. That man has been in the mount with God. How does it appear? Is he gloomy and sullen, harsh and uncharitable? Is his tongue filled with anathemas? Flashes his eye destruction on mankind? He is a liar and an impostor, believe him not; he is not come down from the God of the law, from the God of the gospel, from the relenting Father of Israel, from the compassionate Father of the human race: no, he has been conversing with, he has ascended from the malignant enemy of God and man; by his spirit you may know whose he is.

Pretenders are at as much pains to display the lustre of their outsides as Moses was to conceal his. By this then you shall try and know yourselves, and form your judgment of others. Does a man issue forth from his closet, return from the temple, retire from the Lord's table, with his temper sweetened, his heart enlarged, with the law of kindness on his tongue, with the tear of compassion, or the lustre of benevolence in his eye? Is he like Moses, more attentive to the condition, necessities, and instruction of others, than earnest to blaze abroad his own excellencies, in order to obtain reputation for himself? How gloriously does such an one shine in the eyes of men: but that is nothing, how gloriously does he shine in the eyes of God! And that is true glory which God sees to be such.

“The face of Moses shone, and they were afraid
“to come nigh him.” Verse 30. Of what importance

is it to inquire—At what particular moment, and through what particular medium this singular appearance was produced? Is it not sufficient for me, that I see the fruit hastening to its maturity, though the commencement and progress of vegetation escape me? I look up and “behold the face of the sun,” and draw comfort from his beams, though the discriminating instant of darkness and of the dawning was too fine for my perception. Let me be able to say with the man restored to sight, “One thing I know, “that whereas I was blind, now I see,” John ix. 25; and I shall leave to others a minute inquiry into the process of the cure. Show me a man shining in the beauty of holiness, a man really changed in heart and in life, and I will not trouble him to tell me, what perhaps he does not know, and therefore cannot declare, at what place, by means of what preacher, or by what dispensation of Providence, the important change passed upon him.

A truly good man is among the first to discover, to acknowledge, and to correct his own errors and imperfections; but humility spreads the veil which conceals his good qualities, first over his own eyes, and he is among the last to discern the splendour which confounds others. What a powerful charm is there in undissembled goodness, when the wicked themselves are constrained to venerate and to approve it, even while it condemns them!

Besides the instance in the text, Scripture has furnished us with at least another, and a most illustri-

ous one, in the history of Stephen, the first martyr to Christianity, after its divine Author. An enraged multitude, blood-thirsty accusers, and a partial tribunal, feel themselves awed into a temporary reverence; their fury stands suspended while they behold him, "All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Acts vi. 15. But there is a greater than even this upon record. The band which broke into the garden with their officers, under the commission of the chief priests, and headed by the traitor, to apprehend Jesus of Nazareth, were so struck with an inexpressible something in his presence and address, "that they went backward and fell to the ground." John xviii. 6.

But what made Israel to shrink from the presence of their gracious leader, intercessor, and friend? What could render the presence of his affectionate brother formidable to Aaron? That which drove the first transgressor to "hide himself from the presence of the Lord God." It is conscience that makes cowards of all men; it is conscience that converts the rustling of a leaf, the shaking of a bulrush, into a spectre from the grave, or a flaming minister from Heaven to execute vengeance. Under the awful terrors of divine glory, they had lately entreated, saying, "Let Moses speak to us, and we will hear;" but now, even the look of Moses, though he say nothing, is too much for a guilty people to bear.—Alas! How little do men reflect, when engaged in criminal pursuits, that the pleasures of sin in which

they riot, are one day to become hideous ghosts to disturb their repose, to scare the imagination, to harrow up the soul, to accuse them at the tribunal of God, to be their tormenters for ever!

Moses, conscious of good-will to all, exulting in the thought of having procured pardon and reconciliation for them, but unconscious of the change which had passed upon his own person, observes with concern and surprise that every one avoided him. At length he discovers the brightness of his own countenance reflected from their guilty, blushing foreheads; and by words of kindness encourages them to return, whom the terror of his looks had dismayed and put to flight. We then find him, with the condescension of true goodness, accommodating himself to the circumstances of the people whom he was appointed to instruct. Intercourse with Heaven has raised *him* to a higher pitch of exaltation; guilt and fear have degraded *them*: but love levels the mountains, and fills up the valleys of separation. The interposition of a veil reduces him to their standard, because the confidence of innocence raised them not to his. The law of God must be taught to the people, though the teacher is become more glorious. This is a plain and striking lesson to all who undertake to instruct others. It is a wretched ambition merely to shine. The great aim of a teacher should be to communicate knowledge; and he shows himself to be possessed of most, who knows best how to convey it to others. He is the truly rich man who by the proper use of his

wealth, assists in making many rich; not he who possesses a vast hoard which he knows not how to enjoy; nor he who makes an ostentatious display of riches merely to insult his poorer neighbour; and he who speaks three words in a known language, to the edification of the hearer, has more real learning than the babbler of ten thousand, in a language which no one understands.

“Till he had done speaking,” then, “Moses put a veil on his face,” verse 33; so that the sound of his voice might be heard, while the terrifying lustre of his face was obscured. But this was not merely an incidental circumstance, arising out of the occasion, and done away with it; but it was designed, in Providence, to be a symbolical representation of the whole Mosaic dispensation, which was nothing else but the gospel under a veil. That this is not a fanciful conjecture, we appeal to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who has removed the veil and discovered the hidden glory which lies under it, and thus writes, “Not that *we*,” meaning the apostles of the Lord Jesus under the New Testament, “not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to

“ be done away, how shall not the ministration of
 “ the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministra-
 “ tion of condemnation be glory, much more doth
 “ the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.
 “ For even that which was made glorious, had no
 “ glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that
 “ excelleth. For if that which is done away was
 “ glorious, much more that which remaineth is glo-
 “ rious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we
 “ use great plainness of speech. And not as Moses,
 “ which put a veil over his face, that the children
 “ of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of
 “ that which is abolished. But their minds were
 “ blinded : for until this day remaineth the same
 “ veil untaken away, in the reading of the Old Tes-
 “ tament ; which veil is done away in Christ. But
 “ even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is
 “ upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall
 “ turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.”
 2 Cor. iii. 5—16.

From the days of Moses down to those of Paul,
 and by Paul himself in the days of his ignorance,
 Moses was heard and read with the veil over his
 face ; was understood in the letter, not in the spirit ?
 and, even after the veil was done away in Christ,
 who is “ the end of the law for righteousness ;” after
 the types were explained, the predictions accom-
 plished, and the great prophet of the Jews had
 brought all his glory, and laid it at the feet of the
 great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, still
 the people who had the best means of information,

who had the power of comparing spiritual things with spiritual, read them, and continue to read them to this day, under the power of passion and prejudice. And he who sees in Moses, and in the other writings of the Old Testament, nothing but the histories of certain events long since past, and confined in their operation and effect to a particular district; nothing but the religious usages and ceremonies practised by a particular people; that man looks with a bandage upon his eyes, understands not what he reads, and therefore cannot profit.

There is a gracious intimation in the passage we have just now quoted, that a period is approaching when Israel too shall turn unto the Lord; when the veil shall be taken away, and Moses, in whom they trusted, shall be seen without a covering; and "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" Rom. xi. 15.

What glorious views of God, of his Providence, of his Grace, does the gospel disclose! The Gentile nations behold their admission into the family of God, and their privileges as his children, in the promises which were made to Abraham and his seed. And the Jews will in time discover the intention and design of their political and religious establishment, in the nature, duration, and extent of the Redeemer's kingdom: when "Israel also shall be saved:" as it is written, "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Rom. xi. 26.

Human frailty rendered the interposition of a veil necessary between Moses and the people : because " they could not look steadfastly to the end of that " which is abolished ;" but when Moses went into the tabernacle to converse with God, a veil to cover his face being unnecessary, it was laid aside.

It is natural to hold out our most favourable appearance to men, to catch at their good opinion, to secure their approbation ; but we see in Moses a mind intent only upon usefulness. He joyfully gives up a little fame for the sake of doing much good. If the church of God be enlightened, what is it to him that he himself is a little obscured ? His lustre is to illuminate Israel. Vain glory always defeats the purpose which it had formed ; humility as certainly gains the point at which it aimed not. Who does not esteem Moses, modestly shrouded in a veil, infinitely more than all the loquacious boasters and exhibitors of themselves that ever existed ? Moses, in talking with the people, employed a veil, not as a mask to insinuate a false idea of what he was not, but to conceal the real excellency which he had ; unlike the hypocrisy and disguise of the world ; and to use disguise with God he knew would be impious, profane, and unavailing. We find him changing his appearance as the occasion required. This was not, in him, versatility and address, a cunning accommodation to circumstances for selfish ends ; but the compliance of wisdom and necessity, in order to be more extensively useful. Thus Paul " became all things to all men, that he might gain " some." And for the same reason a greater than

Moses, a greater than Paul, disdained not the festivity of a marriage solemnity ; refused not the invitation of one ruler, nor rejected the visit of another ; abhorred not to eat with publicans and sinners, if by any means, the ignorant might be instructed, the proud and selfish checked and reprov'd, the modest encouraged, and the mourner comforted.

At the first descent of Moses from the mount, we see the glory of a man zealous for God : at his second the glory of a man owned and honoured of God ; “ the skin of his face shining.” But at his appearance many days afterwards on Tabor, we behold a saint from the world of bliss, altogether glorious. Such is the blessed effect of being with God and “ seeing Him as he is,” not for forty days only, but during a series of ages. And what must it then be, to “ be ever with the Lord,” to glorify God, and to be glorified of him “ in body and spirit which “ are the Lord’s ?” And why was Moses again exhibited on the mount of transfiguration ? Wherefore again displayed in glory ? Again to put a veil upon his face, to empty himself, and to deposit his glory at the feet of Him in whose light and likeness he shone—to talk with Jesus “ concerning the “ cease he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

The Jewish Rabbins pretend to account for the unabated vigour, the unfading lustre of the latter years of the life of Moses, from these very circumstances. The eye, say they, which had endured the sight of God, could not become dim : The natural strength which supported a fast of forty days, could not sink under any future decay.

—Christian, consider Moses, the man of God, invested with lustre which dazzled the eye of every beholder, and which length of time could not impair; and reflect, to what a height of glory communion with God can raise a fallen creature: and aspire after a participation of that grace which adorned him. The glory of his person was a rare and singular attainment; but that of his spirit may be imitated and attained by all. His piety, resignation, and obedience; his meekness, gentleness, and compassion, present amiable patterns, and they are the ornaments suited to your present state. It is given but to a favoured few to exhibit heroic virtue, to perform splendid actions, to acquire extensive reputation; but none is excluded from the honour of simple modest worth, of habitual beneficence, of honest fame. And those are the most valuable and solid acquisitions which “are in the sight of God of great price.”

—Steady and persevering intercourse with Heaven will infallibly transform the whole man into the image of God. The very exterior will be meliorated and improved, and the world itself will “take knowledge” of the disciple who “has been with Jesus.” The exercises of the closet will be seen and felt in the serenity of the countenance, the kindness of the eye, the melody of the voice, the affability and graciousness of the whole deportment. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” Matt. v. 16.

—The time is at hand when the glory which irradiated the face of Moses shall be imparted to the whole company of the redeemed; when the name of God and the Lamb shall shine in every forehead. Behold, and wonder, behold, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God, “A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” Rev. xii. 1. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” Dan. xii. 3. “The *Lord* God is a sun and shield: the *Lord* will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

LECTURE VII.

EXODUS XXIX. 42, 43.

According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel made all the work. And Moses did look upon all the work, and behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it : and Moses blessed them.

IF reason were to maintain its full dominion in man, were the senses perpetually under the control of the mind, a motive to religion would be continually supplied from the natural impulse of a grateful and affectionate heart. The vast universe would become one great temple ; every pebble, every plant, every star would be a witness for God ; and the heaven-born spirit would arise on the wing of every bird, of every breeze of air, to its glorious Author. But man, degraded by sin, blinded by passion, involved in error ; man, impaired in understanding, grovelling in affection, in captivity to sense, needs to be frequently admonished of his obligation to, and dependence upon God his Creator and Preserver. He needs forms, and seasons, and places of worship ; the heart must be approached through the channels of sense ; and our acquaintance with the Father of Spirits must be preserved by means of things seen and temporal. Hence, a sab-

bath, a tabernacle, a temple ; sacrifices, sacraments, sermons, are the institution of Heaven ; they are the ordinances of Him “ who knows what is in man,” and what is necessary to man.

It is easy to conceive what the world would be, destitute of the modes and offices of religion, when we consider what men are, with the advantage of “ line upon line, precept upon precept,” revelation upon revelation. The religious ceremonies and services in use among ancient nations, whatever were their origin, become respectable in our eyes merely from their antiquity : but when to antiquity is super-added *divine authority* ; when we behold the great JEHOVAH condescending to describe and to appoint the rites of his own worship, to exhibit a model of all the instruments to be employed in his service, we feel something more than respect ; we are filled with veneration ; we break out in the exclamation of Solomon, “ Will God indeed dwell with men “ upon the earth ? ”

Moses had now finally descended from the mount, furnished with complete instructions for settling the civil government and the religious polity of the nation which God “ chose, to place his name there.” Under the direction of men divinely inspired for the work, he addresses himself to the execution of the plan which God himself had vouchsafed to delineate. From the liberality and zeal of the people, materials are speedily and amply supplied. Through the skill and assiduity of the artists the business is speedily and successfully dispatched ; and on the first anni-

versary of the departure out of Egypt, the tabernacle is ready to be reared up.

It is not my design to attempt a minute description of that sacred structure, and of its furniture. But I find it impossible to pass them by entirely, as I apprehend a few remarks of a practical nature fall directly within the design of these exercises, and may, by the divine blessing, render the awful monuments of religion in the wilderness, instructive and useful in gospel times.

The name and the nature of the tabernacle were, perhaps, intended to be emblematical of the whole dispensation, of which it was a leading instrument. A tent, or tabernacle, is a temporary and portable habitation, suited to a state of journeying or warfare : and this, in particular, was to be the guide to Canaan, to give the signal of motion and of rest ; to lead the way to victory and peace : and when full possession was at length given, the tabernacle transferred its transitory glory to the stationary glory of the temple ; or rather was consolidated into one glory with it. Thus all the positive institutions of religion are designed to be our monitors, guides, and comfortors in the wilderness ; to introduce us into the promised land ; and then the objects of faith shall become objects of vision, and the redeemed of the Lord shall worship together in that temple from which there is no more going out.

Jehovah declared himself not only the spiritual Head of the Israelitish church and nation, but also their temporal Sovereign ; the supreme Head and

Governor of their political economy. As such, he gave commandment to pitch a tent for the Leader and Commander of his people, from whence orders were expected and issued; over which the royal standard was seen perpetually hovering in the dreadful glory of a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. And the final fulfilling of the Scriptures is the gathering into one, to the standard of the Redeemer, "a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," Rev. vii. 9; when at the sounding of the seventh angel, there shall be great voices in Heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Ch. xi. 15.

From the contemplation of a tabernacle constructed of parts that might be separated and joined together again, as occasion required, we are led to contemplate the "city of our solemnities," Jerusalem that is above, "a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." Isaiah xxxiii. 20, 21.

The fabric in the wilderness was not a design of human skill, nor fashioned according to models seen in Egypt, but planned of infinite wisdom,

erected, to a single pin, according to a pattern shown to Moses on the mount. In things which relate to the management of this world, a latitude is given to the exercise of human prudence and discretion; but in what regards the immediate worship and service of God, men are tied up to an iota and a tittle, "Thus saith the Lord." The work of God is perfect, his law is perfect, his word is perfect, none can with safety add thereto, or diminish from it. A holy and a jealous God has fenced himself and his ordinances as with a wall of fire, which presumption attempts to break through at its peril. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Rev. xxii. 18, 19. When we consider the dreadful import of these words, who but must tremble to think on the rash, the irreverent, the profane use that is daily made of the name and of the book of God? Is it thus ye requite your Maker, foolish creatures and unwise? "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" Job ix. 4.

The tabernacle consisted of three several apart-

ments one within another—The court, the holy place, and the most holy place, or the holy of holies. The temple of Solomon was built upon the same plan. And the earlier Christian churches preserved something of a resemblance to it: for they consisted first, of a spacious porch, where the penitents who implored the prayers of the faithful, the Catechumens, the Gentiles, the Jews, and the Heretics, were stopped short. The second compartment was the *Navs*, the nave, or body of the temple, where the faithful assembled, and performed their devotions; and the third was the *Βημα*, or choir, into which ecclesiastics only were admitted, and in which were placed the altar, the throne of the bishop, and the stalls of the clergy.

Some learned men have given it as their opinion, that the Grecians borrowed their noble and beautiful style of architecture, from the perfect Hebrew models described in the sacred volume; that it was transmitted by them to the Romans: from whom it has descended to all the provinces of their great empire, and continues to be the ornament and the glory of the modern world. Indeed it seems to be something more than human invention and art, that, through the lapse of so many ages, so many revolutions of empire, so many changes of taste and opinion, the same arrangement and proportions should excite universal admiration, and yield universal delight; and that the slightest deviation from the principles of that noble art should instantly be observed, and universally offend the eye.

—Does it not seem as if he who formed the eye, had also designed to design the model of what would fill and please it?

The court, then, was rather the large space of ground in which the tabernacle was erected, than any part of the tabernacle. Its form was an oblong, whose length was double its breadth, being an hundred cubits by fifty, that is, according to the most approved calculation, an hundred and fifty feet by seventy-five. It was encompassed on all sides by curtains of fine twined linen, fixed to fifty-six pillars of shittim, that is, as the Seventy interpret it, incorruptible wood, filleted with silver, of the height of five cubits, or seven feet and a half. The gate or passage into the court was a hanging of twenty cubits, curiously embroidered, and supported by four pillars of the same materials and workmanship. On all which particulars, I shall detain you to make this only remark: When we see the great God condescending to give directions concerning the formation and use of the most minute implements pertaining to sanctuary service, of pins, rings, loops, and hooks, man is taught to consider nothing as beneath his notice which can affect his own credit, usefulness, and comfort, or the fame, virtue, and happiness of his neighbour. “Let all things be done by us decently and in order.” Be it the glory of a fabulous Jupiter, that it is beneath his dignity, and inconsistent with his higher occupations, to attend to small matters. It is the glory

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of the living and true God, the Maker and Preserver of all things, it is the excellency of his administration, the beauty of his providence, that "the hairs of our head are numbered of him." "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." Matt. x. 29.

On entering the court, the objects which first presented themselves were, on the one hand, the altar of burnt-offering, and on the other, the laver for the priests to wash in. The materials and form of these two instruments of divine worship have afforded to the learned and ingenious many curious subjects of speculation, some of which might perhaps amuse, but could not greatly edify you. As the whole service of the tabernacle was typical, and presented the "shadow of good things to come," it will not I trust be deemed a mere flight of imagination to suppose, that by the altar of burnt-offerings, and the use to which it was devoted, the great Atonement, the means of pardon and acceptance with God, was shadowed forth; and that by the laver and its use, on the other hand, was represented the purity which becomes all who approach to a pure and holy God. In their nearness to, and union with each other, they exhibit that which brings the guilty near unto God, and that which fits them for communion with God: Justification freely by the grace of God, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" and sanctification by the Spirit of God, whereby we are prepared to

be "partakers of the inheritance of saints in light." An altar without a laver were to encourage the offender to "continue in sin, because grace abounds;" a laver without an altar would be to inspire a vain confidence in an external and imperfect righteousness, to the neglect of that which is of God by faith, and which purifieth the heart. In conjunction, they represent man's happiest state and highest glory, sin forgiven and nature renewed.

"The holy place," which was properly the tabernacle, presented itself at the upper end of the court. Its dimensions are not laid down by Moses. Those who take it for granted that the tabernacle was a miniature representation of the temple, from the measurement of that great edifice as described in the first book of Kings, make the length of the holy place of the tabernacle to be twenty cubits or thirty feet. It was separated from the court by a curtain, within which none but the priests were permitted to enter, and where they officiated at the altar of the Lord, in the order of their course. Josephus affirms, that when the priests ministered in the holy place, the separating veil was drawn up, so that they could be seen of the people. Philo, with greater appearance of truth, maintains the contrary opinion. It is clear from a passage in the Gospel according to Luke, that the priest who officiated in the holy place of the second temple was out of the sight of the people; for it is said of Zacharias, when he was offering incense in the holy place, "the whole multitude was praying without;"

that they waited for him, and "marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple," Luke i. 10—21; and they discovered not the cause of it till he made it known to them by signs.

Though we are not informed of the exact dimensions of the "holy place," we know that it was a covered tent, with one fold of various materials upon another. First, ten curtains of equal size, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen; embroidered with cherubims: and coupled together with loops of blue and taches of gold. Above these were extended eleven curtains of goat's hair, hung together by taches of brass.—These again were covered with rams' skins dyed red; and over all there was a covering of badgers' skins, probably as a protection from the injuries of the air and weather. The intention and meaning of this multiplied and variegated ceiling we pretend not to explain. Was it intended to represent the impenetrable recesses of the Eternal Mind; to check the folly and sinfulness of an over-curious inquiry into mysteries which are intentionally concealed; and to teach men to make a wise and temperate use of known and revealed truth? Was it not sufficient to every pious Israelite, that the altar of burnt-offering and the laver of purification were under the open canopy of Heaven, seen of all, accessible to all? And by this circumstance, did not even the law teach the open and unlimited extent of salvation by the great Atonement? Religion forbade, and the structure prevented, the body of the people from entering within the veil, or pe-

penetrating into the mysteries concealed under such a covering; one fold past, another, and another, in almost endless succession, opposed itself.—Woe be to him who makes a mystery of what God has graciously disclosed; and woe be to him who presumes to pry into what God has intentionally hid from his eyes. Thus sublimely sings the enraptured British Psalmist:

Chain'd to his throne a volume lies,
With all the fates of men;
With every angel's form and size
Drawn by th' eternal pen.
His Providence unfolds the book,
And makes his counsels shine:
Each opening leaf, and every stroke
Fulfils some deep design.
Here he exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown;
Anon the following page he turns,
And treads the monarch down.
Not *Gabriel* asks the reason why,
Nor God the reason gives;
Nor dares the favourite angel pry
Between the folded leaves.

WATTS, HORN LYRICAL.

The furniture of the holy place is minutely described, and its meaning and use are not obscurely pointed out in many places of the Sacred Writings. It consisted of three articles, the golden candlestick with seven lamps; the golden altar of incense; and the table of show-bread. Each of which might easily furnish matter for a separate discourse; but

we confine ourselves to general ideas, and practical observations.

The first piece of furniture in the holy place was "the golden candlestick to give light;" all whose appurtenances were of pure beaten gold. It was placed on the south side, that is, on the left hand as you enter the tabernacle, directly opposite to the table of show-bread. It was a talent in weight; which is about one thousand five hundred ounces, or one hundred and twenty-five Roman pounds, whose value, according to the calculation of the learned Bishop of Peterborough, was five thousand and seventy-five pounds fifteen shillings and a fraction of our money. It is the most generally received opinion, that all, or some of these seven lamps in the candlestick were kept continually burning; that they were extinguished in turn, to be cleansed and supplied with fresh oil; and that their parts were made to separate for this very purpose. As the priests alone could enter the holy place, to them of course was committed the whole charge of lighting, trimming, and cleaning the lamps. It is much easier to ask many questions on this subject than to answer one. Why the number of seven lamps in one candlestick; that number of perfection, as some have called it, and under which so many mysteries are supposed to be concealed? Why should it burn in a place where no eye was to see its light, or to receive benefit from it, except a solitary priest? Wherefore this waste of treasure for no apparent equivalent use? To all such questions, it

must be replied, "Thus the great Lawgiver would have it." "We know in part, and we prophesy in part. What He doeth we know not now, but we shall know hereafter."

From this created, confined, imperfect, self-consuming light, we are led to contemplate that pure, eternal, undecaying LIGHT which communicates, of its own splendour, whatever glory any creature possesses. We are led to Him who is the true light of the world:

We silently turn from the tabernacle in the wilderness to adore Him who in the beginning said, "Let there be light: and there was light." We are conducted in the visions of God, to contemplate the splendour of the Christian churches, and behold "the Son of Man, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." We are hurried forward to the last awful hour of dissolving Nature, when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken." We are transported to that celestial city, which "has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Without encroaching on your time and patience, or running over the subjects with indecent and unprofitable haste, it were impossible to convey any proper and useful idea of the remaining utensils of this venerable structure, and the still more venerable ~~recess~~ ~~inclosed~~ within it, styled "the most holy

“place.” The description of these, therefore, with the history of the august ceremonies of setting up the tabernacle, and the relation of the whole to the “better things to come,” of which they were “the shadows,” shall be postponed to another Lecture, which will conclude the second book of this Sacred History, and another annual revolution of our own frail transitory life. “Teach us,” O God, “so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” Psalm xc. 12. Vouchsafe to dwell within us in thy word and ordinances; let “Christ dwell in our hearts by faith,” and raise us one after another to dwell with thee in the holiest of all, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE VIII.

EXODUS XL. 17, 34, 38.

And it came to pass in the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up. —Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not, till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

EVERY production of human power and skill bears this inscription, "I am made to perish." Man himself, the moment he begins to breathe, begins to die, and his noblest, and most durable and most glorious works, are no sooner completed than they begin to fall to decay. In vain we look for the monuments of ancient grandeur and magnificence: they have either wholly vanished away, or present to the eye scattered fragments, or tottering ruins, ready to dash themselves upon the ground. Where is now that city and tower which raised its proud head to Heaven, in defiance of the waters of a second deluge? Neither the solid and costly ma-

terials of which it was composed, the sacred purposes to which it was applied, nor the awful glory which once presided over and resided in it, have preserved from decay and loss the tabernacle of the congregation, the work of divinely inspired Bezaleel and Aholiab. Of the magnificent structure on mount Zion, the wonder and glory of the whole earth, not one story remaineth upon another.

All that was formal and instrumental in the ancient dispensation seems to have been, by the special appointment of Providence, destroyed and annihilated, that the spirit of it alone might remain. The tabernacle and temple, and their service, exist only in description, and in those simpler and more spiritual ordinances to which they have given place. And the institutions which now remain are only preparing the way for a more august, more splendid, and more durable manifestation of the divine glory. The legal economy introduced that of grace by the Gospel, and then passed away. The dispensation of grace, in like manner, is now performing its work, fulfilling its day, announcing, unfolding, introducing the kingdom of glory; and "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

The satisfaction of Moses, when the whole work of the tabernacle and of its furniture was completed, is more easily to be conceived than expressed. To see the pattern showed him in the mount exactly copied, the design of the great Jehovah perfectly fulfilled, must have filled the good man's mind with

delight ineffable. With a holy joy similar to this must every lover of the Gospel observe the exact coincidence between "the shadows of good things to come," and "the very image of the things;" between the predictions concerning the Saviour of the world, and their accomplishment; between the promises made unto the fathers, and the blessings enjoyed by their children. And what will it be, Christians, in that world of bliss, which is the end of our faith and the grand object of our hope; what will it be to find the entire coincidence between the descriptions contained in this book, of future and heavenly glory, and the things described; between the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel, and the glorious realities of our Father's house above; between the spirit which Christianity now teaches and inspires, in order to dignify and bless mankind, and the spirit which all the redeemed shall feel, enjoy, and express, when raised to the dignity of being kings and priests unto God?

In the preceding Lecture we endeavoured to lead your attention to the form, use, and end of the tabernacle erected in the wilderness, and of the several parts of its sacred furniture. The outward court, under the open canopy of heaven, containing "the brazen altar of burnt-offering," on which incessantly burned the consecrated fire for offering up the daily sacrifice; and close by it "the laver of brass for the priests to wash in." We conducted you with trembling feet into the "holy place," concealed in front from every profane eye by a veil

which it was death to draw aside; and from above, by covering upon covering which no eye could penetrate. In this sacred recess were placed "the golden candlestick to give light, the golden altar of incense, and the table of show-bread." Having spoken briefly of the first of these, we now proceed to recommend to your notice the other two.

The "altar of incense" was made of shittim or incorruptible wood, overlaid with pure gold, of a cubit square, and its height doubled that dimension, with a golden horn arising at each angle, and the top encompassed with a golden border or crown. It had two rings of gold immediately under the border, to which were fitted two staves of the same wood, also overlaid with gold, for the conveniency of transporting it from place to place, as occasion required. Its use was to burn, at stated times, a sacred perfume of a certain quality and composition, which it was unlawful to compound, or to apply to any other use, or in any other place. It is clear from many parts of Scripture, that the smoke of the sweet incense which ascended from this altar was intended to represent prayer or intercession. "Let my prayer," says the Psalmist, "be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Psalm cxli. 2.

While the priest, invisible to every eye, was employed in burning incense in the holy place, the multitude were praying without. This leads us directly to consider the great "Apostle and High Priest of our profession, who has for us entered,

“not into the holy place made with hands, which
“was the figure of the true, but into heaven itself,
“there to appear in the presence of God for us.”
Though the veil be let down that we cannot behold
Him, the eye of faith penetrates it; sees Him who
is invisible; sees Him lifting up holy and unwearied
hands in our behalf; sees the Prince with God pre-
vailing. The veil was drawn aside, and discovered
to the ravished eyes of the beloved disciple, “an
“angel coming, and standing at the altar, having a
“golden censer: and there was given unto him
“much incense, that he should offer it with the
“prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which
“was before the throne. And the smoke of the in-
“cense which came with the prayers of the saints,
“ascended up before God, out of the angel’s hands.”
Rev. viii. 3, 4. The solitary perfume of secret prayer,
the combined incense of family worship, the mingled
odours of public devotion, the prayers of all saints,
derive an activity, a force, an elevation, from the
merit and mediation of the Redeemer, which raise
them to the throne of God, where, being accepted
through the beloved, they descend again in showers
of blessings on the believer’s head.

Behold the altar which sanctifies the gift, the
ladder, whose foundation is on the earth, but its
summit reacheth heaven, along which the ministering
spirits to the heirs of salvation convey the vows, the
praises, the holy desires of the faithful, up to their
Father and their God; and re-convey the gifts and
graces of their heavenly Father to his children upon

earth. The approach to the golden altar of incense was by the way of the brazen altar of burnt-offering: the new and living way that conducts "into the holiest of all," is through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh. Jesus having suffered the things which were appointed, entered into his glory. As by the altar of burnt-offering, so by the laver of purification, the holy place was approachable; for "without holiness no man shall see God;" and "every one that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity."

The horns at the corners of the altar have been considered as emblematical of strength, and being tipped with the blood of the atoning victim, are conceived to represent the power of God, and the grace that is in Christ Jesus, united in the work of man's redemption.

The quadrangular figure of the altar, and the equality of its sides, may point out the impartial regards of the great Father of all, under the dispensation to which that given by Moses conducted, to men of every nation under heaven, and they prefigure the day when, according to the words of the Saviour himself, "men shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven." Matt. viii. 11.

The materials of the altar, shittim-wood overlaid with pure gold, by a bold imagination have been supposed a figure of the twofold nature of Christ: the purity, solidity, impassableness of the one, en-

compassing, supporting, securing the fragility of the other, defending it at all points, and bestowing upon it a value, strength, and duration, which it possessed not before.

Finally, the staves fitted to the rings, and perpetually in their place for the conveniency of motion, have been, with what propriety you will judge, construed into an emblem of the transitory nature of the whole dispensation, which looked continually forward to something better than itself; which for ever warned the comers thereunto of their pilgrimage state, saying, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." And it is remarkable, that after Israel was come to his rest in the land of promise, and the holy furniture of the tabernacle was lodged for perpetuity in the temple at Jerusalem, this memorial of motion and change still offered itself to view; the altar, the table, the ark, had the instrument of removing them always in its place, and, in concert with every part of the system of Nature and Providence, call upon men with a loud and distinct voice, saying, "Seek ye another country, that is, an heavenly." But we proceed.

The third and last piece of furniture in this solemn repository was "the table of show-bread," of the same materials with the altar, but of different dimensions, two cubits in length, by one of breadth, and one and a half in height; and, like it, furnished with staves fitted to four rings, for the purpose of conveyance. Its use was to hold the show-bread,

consisting of twelve cakes, according to the number of the twelve tribes, of the finest flour, prepared according to a special prescription, in two piles of six each, to be renewed every sabbath-day, and that which was removed to become the property of, and to be eaten in the holy place by, the priests, the sons of Levi, who ministered at the altar. Now upon the very first sight of it, this ordinance, besides those circumstances which it possessed in common with others, seems designed to be a perpetual acknowledgment on the part of man, of the care and kindness of a gracious Providence, which gives to men the rich enjoyment of the principal support of human life, bread, and with it all the inferior accommodations and comforts which render it desirable. It was, on the other hand, the security and pledge which God vouchsafed to give to his church and people, that bread should continually be given them; that while Israel owned and acknowledged God in the way of piety and devotedness to his service, he would own and acknowledge them by an unwearied and effectual attention to their necessary demands and reasonable wishes.

A common table is the badge of familiarity and friendship; it is the sweetest emblem of domestic union and happiness; of paternal concern, of filial tenderness, of brotherly love.

The "show-bread" was appropriated to persons of a sacred profession, to sacred seasons, and to a holy place, unless when the greatness of the occasion superseded the strictness of the letter, and the law

of mercy took precedence of the law of sacrifice. O how much more extended is the grace of the Gospel! David alone and his company, and that only once, on a necessitous occasion, was admitted to the privileges of a son of Levi, to a participation of the consecrated bread; but "behold," says the great Head of the Christian church, "I stand at the door, and knock: if *any man* hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. iii. 20. What an honour was it to those Levites to be received and treated as the guests of the great Jehovah! But it is not once to be compared with the unspeakable felicity and honour of receiving and entertaining the King of Glory. And such felicity is the portion of the meanest of the saints: thus shall it be done to the man, however poor or despised among his equals, whom He by whom kings reign delighteth to honour: for "behold the tabernacle of God is with men." Rev. xxi. 3. The twelve tribes, represented by so many cakes of bread, presented without ceasing before God in the holy place, were without ceasing admonished of their common relation to one another, and of their constant security under their heavenly Father's watchful eye, and the shelter of his expanded wings. "Can a woman forget her sucking-child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Isaiah xlix. 15.

The renewal of the cakes every returning sabbath,

different yet the same, removed yet remaining, the old applied to one use the new to another, may not unfitly represent that bread of life which our heavenly Father's love has provided for the fare of our Christian sabbaths—the very food which our forefathers lived upon; not another Gospel, but that which was from the beginning; but served up for our use by men possessed of different gifts, “according as God hath distributed to every man the proportion of faith:” and it is the happiness and the praise of every scribe who “is instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven, to be like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.” Matt. xiii. 52.

Once more, might not this table of the Lord, perpetually covered, perpetually furnished, be intended as a figure of that table which the eternal wisdom of the Father has prepared and provided with “the bread which came down from Heaven to give life to the world?” And from thence, by an easy and natural transition, the eye ascends to our Father's house above, in which “there are many mansions,” and where “there is bread enough and to spare;” and O how “happy is that man who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.”

Such was the holy place and its furniture; the uses to which it was applied, and the spiritual objects which it presents to our view.

With reverence we draw nigh to the last solemn recess of this venerable structure, called “the ark,” by way of eminence and distinction; sometimes,

“the ark of the covenant;” the ark of the “testimony;” the ark of “his strength;” the ark “whose name is called by the name of the God of “Israel.” We shall pass by those circumstances which were in common to it with the other implements of the worldly sanctuary, the holy places made with hands; and point out a few of those which were peculiar to itself. It was a close chest of two cubits and a half long, one and a half broad, and one and a half in height; of the self-same materials with the rest. The covering was denominated the mercy seat; from the two ends of which arose two figures of cherubim, of beaten or solid gold, with their faces turned, and their wings extended, towards each other; looking down together towards the mercy seat, and concealing it from the eye. For any one to touch this with so much as a finger, or to presume to look into it, except those who were divinely appointed for the purpose, was instant and certain death, as the dreadful punishment of Uzzah and of the men of Bethshemesh awfully evinced. Its contents were the two tables of testimony, the golden pot with manna, the memorial of Israel’s miraculous supply in the wilderness, and Aaron’s rod that budded. Its principal use was to point out a way in the pathless wilderness for Israel to march in. From between the cherubim the divine oracles were delivered, at first to Moses by a voice, for God conversed with him as a man with his friend; and afterwards to the high priest, who consulted by Urim and Thummim, which is supposed to have

been a supernatural declaration of the divine will, by means of rays of glory darted from the most holy place upon the breast-plate which was studded with twelve gems. But the nature and manner of this consultation and response now are, and are likely to remain so, a secret to mankind.

Besides marking out the way, and directing the several encampments in the wilderness, we shall meet in the course of this history with a special interposition of it in many noted particular cases. By it the waters of Jordan were divided asunder, and opened a passage for Israel into the promised land. Before it the proud walls of Jericho were levelled with the ground, after having been encompassed by it for seven days. Its presence confounded Dagon, and plagued the Philistines. Treated with respect, or approached carelessly and presumptuously, it became a protection and a source of blessing to one family; a terror and a curse to another. The king of Israel reckoned it the glory of his house, and the protection of his kingdom; and he had it conveyed with all suitable solemnity to the place prepared for it. And finally, it completed the splendour and magnificence of the sacred edifice on mount Zion, the joy and wonder of the whole earth. And the divine presence, of which it was the symbol, constitutes the safety, strength, and happiness of every living temple which the Holy Ghost hath reared.— Let my heart, O God, be an altar from whence the sweet incense of gratitude, love, and praise may continually ascend. “Arise, O Lord, unto this thy

“rest; thou and the ark of thy strength. Let thy
“priest be clothed with righteousness; let me with
“all thy saints shout for joy.—Turn not away the
“face of thine anointed.”

The conjectures of the learned on the subject of the cherubim are various, many of them fanciful, and for the most part unsatisfactory. The most obvious and most generally received opinion is, that they were emblematical representations of the angelic or heavenly host: and the attributes here assigned to them, their attitude, and their employment in the tabernacle service, correspond exactly to the idea given us in other parts of Scripture, of those flaming ministers who stand continually before God, who execute his pleasure, who adore his divine perfections, and minister to the heirs of salvation.

The ark may be considered as the throne of God. The cherubim encompassed that throne, as the attendants in earthly courts surround the throne and person of their prince. This is the precise idea suggested by the prophet Isaiah, of the nature and office of those blessed spirits, in the sixth chapter of his prophecy. “In the year that king Uzziah
“died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne,
“high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
“Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six
“wings; with twain he covered his face, and with
“twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did
“fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy
“holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth
“is full of his glory.” Verses 1—3. Thus also the

prophet Daniel represents the same glorious object :
 " The Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was
 " white as snow, and the hair of his head like the
 " pure wool : his throne was like the fiery flame,
 " and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream
 " issued and came forth from before him ; thousand
 " thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand
 " times ten thousand stood before him." Chap. vii.
 9, 10. Micah saw in vision, " the Eternal sitting
 " upon his throne, and all the host of heaven stand-
 " ing before him, and on the right hand and the
 " left." " The chariots of God," says the psalmist,
 " are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels :
 " the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy
 " place." Psalm lxviii. 17. And in several other
 passages he addresses the Deity as *sitting* and
dwelling among the cherubim. Psalms lxxx. 1.
 xcix. 1.

The cherubim had their faces turned one toward another. This might be intended to represent the perfect union of sentiment and co-operation which subsists among those sons of light. In other places of Scripture we hear their voices in concert, raising one song of praise, as in the passage just now quoted from Isaiah, and of Revelation, chapter fourth :
 " They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy,
 " holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and
 " is to come." Verse 8. " Thou art worthy, O
 " Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power :
 " for thou hast created all things, and for thy plea-
 " sure they are and were created," Rev. iv. 11.

Those glorious beings, differing in degree, infinite in number, have nevertheless but one heart, one desire, one will, one aim—to praise and serve Him who is the Author of their being, and the source of all their happiness.

The cherubim are represented as furnished with wings. This denotes the alacrity, promptitude, and instantaneousness with which angels obey the divine will. Thus, the angel who appeared to Zacharias at the hour of incense, says, “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God:” and hence, elsewhere in Scripture, the activity of angels is compared to the velocity of the wind, and to the rapid irresistible force of fire. “He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea he did fly upon the wings of the wind.” “He maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.” “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.” Psalm ciii. 20, 21.

Once more, the faces of the cherubim were not only turned one to another, but they bended together toward the mercy seat, and their looks were attentively fixed upon the ark. This expresses the holy admiration with which angels are filled of those mysteries of redemption which the ark prefigured. To this remarkable circumstance the apostle Peter alludes in his first epistle, when speaking of salva-

tion through "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," he adds, "which things the angels desire to look into." The words literally translated import, "which things angels stoop down to contemplate." It conveys a beautiful and striking idea of the gospel dispensation. Angels are exalted to the height of glory and felicity. They behold God face to face, and drink of the river of pleasure at its very source. They see his uncreated splendour shining before their eyes. They see his goodness in the blessings which they enjoy. They see his justice in the punishment of angels "which left their first estate." They see his wisdom in the government of this vast universe. In a word, every thing that is capable of filling the enlarged comprehension, of satisfying the inquiring spirit, is set before these pure and exalted intelligences. Nevertheless, amidst so many objects of wonder and delight, in the midst of all this felicity and glory, angels desire to be more and more acquainted with "the things which belong to our peace." They discover a God rich in mercy to men upon earth, as wonderful, as incomprehensible as a God abundant in loving kindness to angels in heaven: and forgetting, if it be lawful to say so, the lustre and happiness of the church triumphant, they descend and mingle with the church militant, and find fuel to divine love, they find materials for pleasing, advancing, endless investigation, in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. "These things the

“angels,” from the heights of heaven, “bend down,” with humble earnestness, with holy desire, “to look into.”

I conclude with quoting a passage of the Rabbi Maimonides (Moro Nevoch. Part III. Chap. xlv.) on the subject: “God commanded Moses,” says he, “to make two cherubim, in order to impress upon the human mind the doctrine of the existence of angels. Had there been but one cherub placed over the mercy-seat, the Israelites might have fallen into a grievous error; they might have imagined, with idolatrous nations, that it was the image of God himself, which they were required to worship under that form. Or they might have been led to believe, on the other hand, that there was but one angel. But the command given to make two cherubim, joined to this declaration, *O Israel, the Lord your God is one Jehovah*, settles both articles beyond the power of dispute. It proves that there is an angelic order, and that it consists of more than one: it prevents our confounding the idea of God with that of angel; seeing there is but one God who created the cherubim, and who created more than one.”

—In this sacred repository were laid up, for perpetual preservation, the awful monuments of the Sinai covenant, of the church established in the wilderness; the memorials of mercies past, the pledges of good things to come—“the tables of the covenant,” the incorruptible manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded: signifying to all future genera-

tions the permanency and immutability of the divine law, the unremitting care and attention of the divine Providence, the dignity and stability of the Levitical priesthood. But the whole economy, and every instrument of it, in process of time passed away. All was at length carried to Babylon. But the dissolution of the empire which dared to violate their sacredness was involved in their violation and dissolution. Read the history of it, Dan. v. 1—6.

“ Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels, which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw part of the hand that wrote. Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.”

Read the writing, with the interpretation of it.

“ This is the writing that was written: **MENE**
“ **MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN.** This is the interpretation of the thing: **MENE**, God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. **TEKEL**,
“ thou art weighed in the balances, and art found
“ wanting. **PERES**, thy kingdom is divided, and
“ given to the Medes and Persians.” Verses 25
“ —28. Read the issue. “ In that night was
“ Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And
“ Darius the Median took the kingdom.” Verses
30, 31.

Such was the wonderful structure erected to the honour of God, and by his special direction, in the wilderness of Sinai. It was begun and perfected within the compass of little more than six months. Every thing was executed according to the pattern showed to Moses in the mount. At length it was set up in all its splendour, with a mixture of holy joy and godly fear: and the divine Inhabitant took solemn possession in the eyes of all Israel. “ A
“ cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and
“ the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

“ Now of the things which we have spoken, this
“ is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is
“ set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty
“ in the Heavens; a minister of the sanctuary,
“ and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched
“ and not man. Who hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established

“upon better promises. In that he saith, a new
“covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that
“which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to va-
“nish away.” Heb. viii. 1, 2, 6, 13.

LECTURE IX.

NUMBERS XX. 23—29.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into mount Hor, in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount. And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

THE lives of most men, from the womb to the grave, pass away unobserved, unregarded, unknown. When their course is finished, the whole history of it shrinks into two little articles; on such a day they were born, and after so many days they died. Of those who emerge out of the general obscurity, some begin their public career at an advanced period of life, and of course it consists of a few shining, interesting, important events, and is confined within the compass of a very few fleeting years: while the pro-

gress of a little selected band, whom an indulgent Providence has vouchsafed signally to nobilitate, and whom the historic pencil is fond to delineate, is distinguished from the cradle to the tomb, by an uninterrupted series of splendid incidents, exemplary virtues, and brilliant actions.

The characters of men are mixed like their fortunes. The most perfect instruction for the generality of mankind, which history furnishes, is perhaps supplied from the exhibition of mixed, that is, of imperfect characters. Unvarying scenes of fraud, violence, and blood; the representation of undeviating, unrelenting, unblushing profligacy, must of necessity create disgust, or diminish the horror of vice. The real annals of mankind present no model of pure and perfect virtue, but one; and from its singularity, it cannot in all respects serve as a pattern for imitation. We contemplate it at an awful distance; we feel ourselves every moment condemned by it: we turn from the divine excellency which covers our faces with shame, and which casts us down to the ground, towards the mercy which has sealed our pardon, and the grace which raises us up again.

The fanciful representations of perfect virtue, which are supplied from the stories of fiction, can but amuse at most; edify they cannot. They want truth, they want nature, they come not home to the bosoms of ordinary men. I might more easily ape the state of a king, than imitate the affectedly sublime virtue of the heroes of romance. Many of

the persons whose profession it is to retail those ideal virtues, are notoriously among the most abandoned and profligate of our race. Those examples, therefore, are to be considered as the most useful, as I flatter myself they are more frequent, which exhibit a mixture in which goodness predominates, and finally prevails; in which virtue is seen wading through difficulties, struggling with temptation, recovering from error, gathering strength from weakness, learning wisdom from experience, sustaining itself by dependence upon God; seeking refuge from its own frailty and imperfection in divine compassion, and crowned, at length, with victory over all opposition, and with the smiles of approving Heaven.

Of this sort is the history and character which the pen of inspiration, which the pencil of a brother has drawn, for the instruction of this evening.

Aaron, the first high priest of the Hebrew nation, and the only brother of Moses, their celebrated legislator, was born in the year of the world two thousand three hundred and seventy: before Christ one thousand six hundred and thirty-four: and before the birth of his brother three years. It is probable he came into the world before the edict of the king of Egypt was published, which commanded all the Israelitish male children to be put to death. For that edict seems to have been directed by a special interposition of Providence, precisely to mark, and eminently to signalize, the first appearance of the great prophet of the Jews. Exposed to no

special danger in infancy, the subject of no interesting memoir in early life, distinguished by no memorable talents or exploits in manhood, we see him far declined into the vale of years, before we see him at all; and, for all our knowledge of him, earlier or later, we are indebted to the labours of his younger brother. Another, among a cloud of witnesses, to prove that the birth-right of Nature, and the destination of Providence, are intended to confer distinctions of a very different kind. Moses has shone forty years in the court of Pharaoh, has formed an alliance by marriage with a foreign prince, and cultivated the virtues, and prosecuted the employments of private life for forty years more, before his elder brother is heard of. And when he is at length brought upon the scene, at the advanced age of eighty-three, it is to occupy an inferior department to his brother, and the elder is yet again to serve the younger.

His first introduction, however, to our acquaintance, places him in a most interesting, respectable, and honourable point of view. We behold a venerable man, fourscore and upwards, agitated with public cares, and moved with fraternal tenderness and affection, on his way through the wilderness in quest of his long absent brother. In these our days of speedy conveyance and communication from pole to pole, from the east to the west, by land, by water, through the air, we can form but a slender idea of the anxiety of friends, removed but a few leagues distance from one another, and their con-

sequent ignorance of each other's situation.—Proportionally sweet must have been the delight of meeting together after long separation. Scripture has described this, as it does every thing else, in its own inimitable manner. “Aaron thy brother, behold he cometh forth to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.” Exodus iv. 14. Behold the interview of two brothers, not the result of previous concert, not the effect of human sagacity, not the fortuitous coincidence of blind, blundering, accidental circumstances; but planned and conducted of Heaven, and effected by him “who worketh all things after the counsel of his will,” and for a great and noble purpose.

The occasion of Aaron's first appearance in the sacred drama is not less memorable. Moses, having received the divine commission to proceed to the deliverance of his nation from Egyptian bondage, repeatedly excuses himself from undertaking that honourable employment, particularly on the footing of his deficiency in the arts of eloquence and persuasion. Did this arise from timidity in Moses? was it a false modesty and humility? or did he indeed labour under a defect of this kind? If the last, can we avoid reflecting on the wonderful equality with which Nature distributes her gifts? In conception who so sublime, in composition who so elegant, in narration who so simple, in written language who so perspicuous, so forcible, so impressive as Moses? Can it be true, then, what he

says of himself, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, "neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken "unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and "of a slow tongue?" Verse 10. Who is so favoured of Nature and Providence, as to possess every talent, every blessing? Who so hardly dealt with as to be left destitute of all? The praise of eloquence certainly belongs to Aaron; for it is bestowed by him who is best able to estimate his own gifts. "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I "know that he can speak well." Verse 14. But O how different is the nature, the importance, the effect, the duration of one talent compared to another! The tongue which overawed Pharaoh, which astonished all Egypt, and charmed the listening ear of Israel, speedily became mute; and of its powerful charm not a single trace remains behind; while the productions of Moses's pen exist, and shall exist, till Nature expire, to instruct, delight, and bless mankind.

The various instruments which Heaven employs are ever suited to their seasons, occasions, and ends. The interview between the brothers takes place according as infinite wisdom had contrived it; and it behoved, on many accounts, to be a pleasant one. Two wise and good men, so nearly related, so fondly attached to each other, after a separation so tedious, to meet again in health, to confer together on matters of such high moment, to enter, under the assured protection of Heaven, upon the noblest and most generous enterprise that can engage great

and lofty spirits, the deliverance of their country! What a field for the exercise of private friendship, of natural affection, of public spirit! On Aaron, according to the divine appointment, fell that most grateful of all tasks, to announce to the wretched the period of their misery, "to proclaim liberty to the captives," to declare the truth and faithfulness of God to the desponding and dejected, and the possession of Canaan to the slaves of Pharaoh.

Eloquence has an enchanting power, even over those who have no interest in the subject of it. How potent, then, the enchantment of the heaven-taught eloquence of Aaron the Levite! What grace must have been poured into his lips, when delivering the message of Love from the great "I AM," the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to their hapless offspring, assuring them that the time to favour them was now come, that his covenant was sure! With what ravished ears must the elders of Israel have listened to such tidings, flowing from such lips! Happy Aaron, thus accomplished, thus commissioned, thus prospered! Happy people, thus remembered, thus addressed, thus persuaded! But wherefore envy his honour, or their happiness? A greater than Aaron is with us; even He who says of himself, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, "because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Isaiah lxi. 1. We announce

you, that Jesus, "in whom all fulness was pleased
"to dwell," whom admiring multitudes worshipped,
saying, "never man spake like this man!" whose
all-commanding voice checked the boisterous ele-
ments, put demons to flight, and pierced the ear of
death,

Christians, we come not to you with the eloquence
of an Aaron; but we bear a message infinitely more
important than his. Our "speech and preaching is
"not with enticing words of man's wisdom," 1 Cor.
ii. 4. O that it might be "in demonstration of the
"Spirit, and of power: that your faith should not
"stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of
"God." 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. He proclaimed freedom
from fetters of iron, and from the oppression of an
earthly tyrant: we proclaim liberty from the bond-
age of sin; from everlasting chains under darkness;
from the cruel tyranny of the devil; from the
dreadful curse of God's violated law, which arms
Satan with his tremendous power, digs the vast re-
cesses of the unfathomable abyss, and feeds the in-
extinguishable flame of the fiery lake. He published
a covenant of a temporary effect, which conveyed
temporal advantages, which was clogged with hard
and hazardous conditions, which has passed away.
We publish a covenant, "ordered in all things and
"sure," whose stability depends not on our fidelity,
which possesses a commanding influence on eternity,
which proposes everlasting benefits, which makes
provision for human frailty, which outruns our ut-
most wishes, composes our justest apprehensions,

transcends our highest hopes. The message of Aaron issued in the prospect, yet distant, of a land flowing with milk and honey, of a pure air, and a fruitful soil ; but infested with enemies, influenced by, and exposed to inclement seasons, and liable to forfeiture. But our preaching, Men and Brethren, looks beyond time and the flaming boundaries of this great universe : it holds out the distant, but not uncertain prospect of a celestial Paradise, stored with every delight that is suited to the nature of a rational and immortal being : which is exposed to no hostile incursion, to no elementary strife ; and whose eternal possession is ensured by the Almighty power of God, and the purchase of a Saviour's blood.

Aaron preached, alas ! to men who could not enter in because of unbelief, and the tongue itself which announced Canaan to others was silenced before Jordan divided. Avert, merciful Father, avert the dreadful omen. Let not the preacher, let none of the hearers of this night, be missing in the day when thou bringest home thy redeemed ones to thy heavenly rest.

—The events of Aaron's life are so blended with, and dependent upon those of his brother, that they cannot be separated. Many of them have accordingly been already adverted to, and shall not therefore now be repeated, our intention being to select those passages of his history, which are more personal and peculiar ; which more clearly mark his distinct character ; and which represent him in

with an office which was to be hereditary in his family, and typical of the unchangeable priesthood of the Son of God.

In the conclusion of the sixth chapter, Moses interrupts the thread of his narration, to deliver the genealogy of the family of Levi; a matter of no little moment in the settlement of that political and religious economy, which God was about to erect for the better government of his people Israel. From this it appears, that Aaron and himself were in the fourth generation, in a direct line from Levi, Jacob's third son; being the sons of Amram, the eldest son of Kohath, the second son of Levi. Hence, they are in the fifth generation from Jacob, in the sixth from Isaac, and the seventh from Abraham. It farther appears, from this genealogical deduction, that Aaron had connected himself with the tribe of Judah, by marrying Elisheba, the daughter of Aminadab, and sister to Naashon; who became soon after the head of the prerogative tribe, the progenitor of its long succession of princes, and the root, according to the flesh, of the promised Messiah. By her he had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.—On all of which I have only to observe, that as the miseries of Egyptian bondage deterred not Aaron from entering into that state which Providence has established for improving the happiness, and mitigating the sorrows of human life, so the in whom he trusted rendered this virtuous union productive of a race of high priests to minister unto God, and to support the honours of their fa-

ther's name and office, to the latest ages of the Jewish commonwealth.

With what care has Providence watched over, and preserved entire, the royal and sacerdotal line till the great purposes of Heaven were accomplished, till the descent of the promised Seed was ascertained ! From that period genealogy was as it were broken into ten thousand fragments, the connexion and succession of families were blotted out, as a thing of nought ; and a new family was established on different principles, in endless succession, all claiming and holding of this “ first-born among many “ brethren.”

As Aaron is represented in the possession of the most pleasing powers of speech, to soothe the woes of Israel, so we see him armed with a tongue, sharp as a two-edged sword, to smite and to break the pride of Pharaoh and of Egypt ; and bearing a potent rod, endued with power to deliver or to destroy. And in this the world is taught to respect, to revere the weakest, meanest, most contemptible weapon, which the hand of Jehovah vouchsafes to use. Its virtue lies not in itself, but in the arm that wields it. Through the whole of the astonishing transactions which follow, we find an exact order and method observed. Aaron uses not the rod at his own discretion, neither does God communicate his pleasure immediately to him ; but the Lord gives the word to Moses, who delivers it to Aaron, who follows the instructions given him. And thus, as an example of the highest authority we are instructed

ed, in obedience to an injunction given long after under another dispensation, "that all things be done decently and in order."

The next memorable event of Aaron's life, after assisting in the plagues of Egypt, and the consequent deliverance of Israel, is his contributing to the defeat of Amalek, by aiding Hur in supporting the weary hands of Moses his brother, upon the mount. To the observations already made on this part of the history, I have only to repeat, and to urge upon your minds, the reflection of the Psalmist: "Behold how good a thing it is," in every point of view, "and how pleasant, for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm cxxxiii. 1. By concord the weakest powers grow and stand; through disunion the strongest are dissolved and fall.

Aaron and his two eldest sons, with seventy of the elders of Israel, by divine appointment accompanied Moses to the lower region of mount Sinai, when he went up to meet God, in order to receive the civil and religious constitution of the state: and with them, as the federal heads and representatives of the nation, the political union and covenant were ratified and confirmed. And this brings us forward to the eventful period of Aaron's history, his solemn destination to the office of priesthood, his preparation for it, and his investiture in it.

The appointment was of Heaven; for "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Heb. v. 4. And even a king, in latter times, who presumed to thrust

himself into the priest's office, paid the price of his rashness by a leprosy which cleaved to him till the day of his death. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21. "Take thou," says the great Source of all honour and authority, "take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, Aaron's sons." Ex. xxviii.

1. It has been objected to Moses, as a proof of a selfish and worldly spirit, that he employed his authority to perpetuate a station of the first dignity and emolument, in his own tribe and family, by the appointment of Aaron to the priesthood, and by the entail of it upon his posterity for ever. But surely the objectors must have studied the case very superficially. The priesthood, though of high dignity, possessed very slender emoluments, and still less authority. It subjected the possessor of it to much painful attendance, to much laborious and unpleasant service, if considered as a mere secular employment. It was a post, if of distinguished honour, so of high responsibility. But supposing it were as lucrative and honourable as it is alleged, why did not Moses assume it to himself? Why did he pass by his own sons? Why not secure the reversion at least, for his own children and their heirs? When a man has immediate descendants of his own body, he is seldom solicitous about the aggrandizement of more distant relations, especially to the prejudice of his own children. The conduct of Moses, therefore,

in the disposal of this high office, on the supposition that he had a choice in the matter, is the reverse of selfish ; it is generous and disinterested to the last degree. The dignity of magistracy is, in his own life-time, communicated with Joshua ; and, at his death, is wholly transferred to him. The office of high priest is conferred upon Aaron, and made perpetual to his branch of the family ; while the sons and descendants of Moses sink into the rank of private citizens, without the stipulation of so much as a foot of land extraordinary in Canaan, in consideration of their father's eminent services. Does this look like avarice and ambition ?—But the truth is, Moses had no choice at all in the case, and presumed to exercise none. God had declared his will, and that was sufficient to him, and it will be so to every good man.

If we attend to some lines in the character, and some steps in the conduct of Aaron, we shall find more just reason of surprise at his appointment to this sacred office. We behold him, at the very æra of his appointment, an abettor of idolatry, and even after his instalment in it, we find him, meanly and wickedly, envying the distinction which was put upon his meek and gentle brother, and with his sister Miriam heading a revolt from his just authority. But, alas ! were perfect men only to minister before God, the altar must soon be deserted. Were not sinful men to be addressed by sinful men, the world must speedily be destitute of preachers. “ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excel-

“ lency of the power may be of God, and not of “ us.” 2 Cor. iv. 7. The design of Providence, from the beginning, seems to have been to convince the world that in every hand his work must prosper ; that if he interpose, all instruments, the most inadequate, must prove powerful, and shall succeed.

A few remarks on the particulars of Aaron’s sacred dress, the services in which he was employed, his solemn consecration to the performance of them, and the subsequent events of his life up to the age of one hundred and twenty-two, together with a cursory view of his typical importance, as the figure of the great high priest of our profession, shall, with divine permission, furnish the subject of the next Lecture. We conclude the present with earnestly exhorting you,

To be instructed by the history of Aaron to begin to live betimes ; if not to public observation, utility, and importance, at least to the purposes of piety, and to the duties and virtues of the private man and of the citizen. He lived long in obscurity before he arose into distinction, and was nurtured in the school of affliction, for station and eminence. And it is generally found that those persons fill high and difficult situations most respectably, who arrive at them through painful study, through many obstacles, and much opposition. It was late, very late in life with him, before he began to appear on the great theatre ; let none be thereby deluded into the vain, deceitful hope of living long. The instances of a longevity so vigorous, and so extended, and so

distinguished, are too rare to encourage any one to trifle with the season of improvement, to neglect the present hour, to presume on a distant uncertain futurity. Old age, should you be one of the few who attain it, never can be supported with dignity, nor enjoyed in comfort, if youth be wasted in dissipation, or permitted to rust in ignorance. In order to possess the vivacity and soundness of youth, under the pressure of years, a portion of the reflection, steadiness, and composure of age, must be called in, to temper and direct the pursuits and enjoyments of early life.

—It is natural to be dazzled with the display of shining talents, and to envy the possessor of them. But these, also, are the portion of only a favoured few. The eloquence of an Aaron is, perhaps, more rarely to be found than a man of a hundred and twenty-two years old. Covet then, and cultivate the virtues which are attainable by all, and which are in themselves infinitely more valuable than the gifts which are bestowed more sparingly, which do not always prove a blessing to their owner, and are not always accompanied with true goodness, which alone is in the sight of God of great price. Has an indulgent Providence, however, distinguished you by those rarer accomplishments which lead to fame, to honour, to usefulness? See that you bury them not, pervert them not, abuse them not. Ability, unsupported by worth, that is, by moral excellence, only renders a man more odious and contemptible, as well as more dangerous, more mischievous, and criminal.

He is responsible both to God and man, for the use or abuse of his superior powers ; and to be *conspicuously* criminal and wretched is a dreadful aggravation of guilt and misery. “ Covet earnestly the “ best gifts :” and yet it were easy to show unto you “ a more excellent way.” If you know it, happy are you if you pursue it.

LECTURE X.

NUMBERS XX. 23—29

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into mount Hor, in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount. And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

WHAT subject is so interesting to man as his intercourse with God, his Creator, Preserver, and Judge? And yet on no subject have men fallen into wilder, and more dangerous mistakes. A mad and bold enthusiasm has at one time elevated rash and presumptuous spirits to the level of Deity; and the grossest terms of human familiarity have been employed, in addressing that infinitely holy and glorious Being, in whose presence angels veil their faces. A timid and grovelling superstition, on the

contrary, has barred to others all access to God ; and an affected, over-refined devotion, has subverted the interests of true piety. The love of this world has encroached upon, and extinguished the spirit of religion ; and a misguided ill-informed religion has attempted to detach some men from the duties and employments of human life.

Men, ever in extremes, have either banished God entirely from their thoughts, or affected a higher degree of reverence for his service, by an avowed neglect of some of the more obvious and more important dictates of his will. Could they but be persuaded to take the Holy Scriptures for the rule of their conduct in all things, many of these practical errors might be prevented. They would thence be instructed to draw nigh to a holy and righteous God with reverence and confidence, as children to a father ; and to rejoice before a merciful and compassionate Saviour with fear and trembling. While the eye of a guilty conscience beheld “ cherubim “ and a flaming sword turning every way, to keep “ the way of the tree of life,” the eye of faith would discern, “ a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, “ his flesh.” Heb. x. 20.

The whole of divine revelation, and indeed it is the chief end of revelation, represents the great Jchovah as accessible to the guilty and the miserable ; but accessible only in a method, and by means, of his own appointment. To the vilest, meanest, most wretched of mankind there is hope towards God,

through Christ Jesus the Lord; but to the purest and most perfect of our fallen race, "there is not "salvation in any other: for there is none other "name under heaven, given among men, whereby "we must be saved." Acts iv. 12. All the stores of divine grace are laid open, all the energy of divine eloquence is employed to assure and encourage the humble. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and "gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness "and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving "iniquity, and transgression, and sin;" Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7; while one denunciation of justice serves to check and repel the impenitent and the proud, "but "who will by no means clear the guilty."

The institution of the priesthood under the law was an explicit and a standing declaration to the same purpose. It consisted of a succession of men, and of a service, ordained of God to be a perpetual memorial to mankind of their apostacy and guilt, and of the means of pardon and reconciliation; of their being by nature and wicked works afar off, but made nigh by the blood of atonement.

Aaron, the first who was called to execute this high office, had already attained his eighty-fourth year, and of course had become venerable in the eyes of men by reason of age. He possessed an insinuating and commanding address; he had acquired a high degree of estimation from the honourable share that belonged to him in effecting the deliverance from Egypt; and he was only brother to the illustrious and renowned legislator of Israel. But

his noblest and most honourable distinction was his appointment and call from Heaven to the discharge of the duties of this exalted station. The pen of inspiration, however, always faithful and true, represents him as a man liable to many infirmities. At the Waters of Strife he was betrayed into anger, self-conceit, and presumption; in the matter of the golden calf we find him chargeable with timidity and sinful compliance: he stands convicted of unkindness and ingratitude to the best and most affectionate of brothers; of the most daring irreverence and impiety towards God, and of dissimulation bordering on falsehood. And even after his consecration to the priesthood, with shame and sorrow we behold him wickedly giving into the mean and contemptible passions of envy and jealousy; and, to heighten this base offence, the unoffending, unprovoking object of these passions, was his own nearest relation, and the man to whom he was indebted for all that eminence to which he was himself raised, and which he transmitted to his family. But with all these imperfections on his head, and many others doubtless, of which it was not the business of this record to convey the memory to us, he was the man whom God was pleased to choose to minister in the first rank at his altar, and to typify the high priest who became us, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, " and separate from sinners."

As in every thing that related to the construction of the tabernacle and its sacred furniture, Moses was

confined to a pattern shown, and to directions given him in the mount, so also in all things that related to the dress, the services, and the attendance of the high priest and his assistants. And you will please to observe that Moses himself having been called and consecrated in an extraordinary manner, was constituted the temporary high priest, to officiate in the consecration of Aaron and his sons. They saw therefore the person of a mediator interposing between themselves and God. They saw an extraordinary priesthood, conjoined to legislative authority residing in their brother, the man whom God chose, and from whom their honour immediately flowed ; they saw an image of the station they were henceforth to occupy, and the purposes which they were to fulfil towards the whole nation. Moses was between God and them ; they were to be between God and the people. He offered sacrifice to make atonement for them ; they were to offer sacrifice to make reconciliation for the sins of all Israel. And in this we see a priesthood more ancient and more honourable than that of Aaron, from which it derives its existence, dignity, and use, and in which it is now absorbed.

As nothing is unimportant on this subject, nothing but what has a significancy, though that significancy we are unable in every instance to discover, we find the sacred historian entering into a minute detail and description of the sacerdotal robes, in which, however, it is not our purpose to follow him, as we would rather suggest ideas than repeat words ;

aim at instruction rather than indulge in speculation, and without pretending to explain every thing, would aim at the praise of inculcating useful truth.

The vestments for the priests are distinguished by the term *holy* : “Thou shalt make the *holy* garments for Aaron.” “Thou shalt put upon Aaron the *holy* garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.” Ex. xl. 13. Now this epithet must undoubtedly refer to the nature of that pure and perfect Being in whose worship they were employed; to the sacredness of the character which was invested with him; and to the spotless purity of Him whose person was hereby prefigured, and whose sanctity, independent of garments of such a texture and quality, consisted in a total freedom from moral pollution : “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” The vestments of the Israelitish high priest, however splendid, could not but cover much weakness and imperfection. Like the dispensation which enjoined them, they had only “a shadow of good things to come, and could never make the comers thereunto perfect.” But even in a moral and religious view, surely they were not without their use. They were a constant and affectionate admonition from God to the persons who wore them; saying, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” They were a constant and pathetic admonition to the people; saying, “I will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh unto me. They are an everlasting admonition to the Christian

world, who are all kings and *priests* unto God, that they are called and engaged “to holiness in all manner of conversation.” If times, and places, and dress, serve as guards to virtue, if they preserve decency and prevent vice, do they not answer a valuable and important purpose to mankind? In perfect conformity to this idea, the loftiest and most conspicuous article of the high priest’s dress was a plate of pure gold, affixed with a blue lace to the fore-front of the mitre, having engraved upon it this remarkable inscription, in order to be seen and read of all men: “*Holiness to the Lord.*” Thereby the wearer became “as a city that is set on a hill, which cannot be hid,” Matt. v. 14; and this bright memorial incessantly, though silently, proclaimed to the eye, to the heart, to the conscience, “a holy God, a holy service, a holy minister, a holy people, a holy covenant.”

We accordingly observe the strictest attention to external decorum run through the whole of this divine institution. The eye being one of the great avenues to the soul, guilt being the parent of shame, and the dispensations of the divine wisdom and mercy being adapted to the condition and character of men, as they are, depraved and degraded by sin, not ~~the~~ man was, pure and perfect from the hand of his Creator, the heart and conscience must be addressed through the senses.

The next most observable and significant part of Aaron’s dress, was the splendid breast-plate, consisting of twelve several precious stones in gold,

inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes in their order; placed externally upon the seat of the heart, to keep for ever alive a tender concern about the whole Israel of God, to remind Aaron and his sons for ever, that they were elevated to this high station not for their own sakes merely, but to be a public benefit. It aimed at producing a most important effect on three different sorts of persons, and was well calculated for this purpose. It presented unto God, according to his own ordinance, a memorial of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed after them. It taught the high priest to consider the case of the people as his own, to regard them with impartial, undivided affection, to be watchfully attentive to their temporal, but especially to their spiritual concerns, to wrestle and make supplication in their behalf. It inspired the people with affection and gratitude to the man whose whole life and labours were devoted to their service, who watched for their souls, who had renounced an earthly portion among his brethren, and all the gainful walks of life, to be subservient to their best interests. It formed a most endearing bond of union between them who were administered unto, and them who ministered. It formed a most endearing bond of union among the tribes themselves. Twelve gems of various complexions, set in two different frames, composed nevertheless but one breast-plate; so twelve tribes constituted but one congregation, one church, one Israel. The loss of any one must have marred and destroyed the

whole; must have tended to diminish its lustre, to impair its strength. It taught them to love as brethren, the children of one father, the worshippers of one God. It inspired confidence in the care and protection of that God. They saw their representative bearing upon his heart into the holy place their names and their condition. They had the consolation of reflecting that their memorial would ascend to Heaven, with the sweet perfume of that incense which he daily burned upon the golden altar. And the whole looked forward to the day, to the office, to the person, to the work of Him, of whom, and of whose body the church, Isaiah thus speaks in prophetic vision: "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me," Isaiah xlix. 14—16; and who thus speaks of himself: "Those that thou gavest me I have kept. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may

“ know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them
“ as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they
“ also whom thou hast given me, be with me where
“ I am; that they may behold my glory which
“ thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before
“ the foundation of the world,” John xvii. 12, 13,
21—24; and of whom the apostle thus speaks:
“ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s
“ elect? It is God that justifieth : who is he that
“ condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea, rather
“ that is risen again, who is even at the right hand
“ of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”
Rom. viii. 33, 34. Hence Christians are united in
still dearer bonds, animated with superior confidence,
secured by a firmer and more durable covenant. Hence
Christian ministers are encouraged with greater boldness,
with more ardent importunity, with more assured hope
of success, to draw nigh to the throne of grace, as for
themselves, so for sinful and wretched creatures of every
description.

Under the gospel dispensation every hour is the
hour of incense, every believer is a minister of the
sanctuary, every individual is a name engraven upon
the heart of the great “ Apostle and high
“ priest of our profession,” and is recorded in the
“ Lamb’s book of life, among the living in Jerusalem.”

The other particulars of Aaron’s official dress, we
shall not now stop to commemorate ; partly because
we have not a distinct idea of them, and partly, because
through such a thick cloud as time, change

of manners, and the general disuse of the sacred language have interposed, it is difficult, if not impossible, to discover their meaning and import, with reference to the evangelical dispensation; in which great part of the beauty, excellency, and usefulness of the Mosaic economy consists.

The ceremonies of Aaron's inauguration were in a high degree solemn and august. They were performed by Moses himself, in the most public manner. Aaron and his sons were conducted to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, in the presence of a public assembly called for the purpose; they were stripped of their usual garments, and washed with water. He was then arrayed in the several parts of the sacerdotal habit, in their order. The holy vessels of the sanctuary, and all its sacred utensils were then, one after another, anointed with the holy oil of consecration; and last of all, Aaron himself, the living instrument of divine worship, was set apart to his momentous charge, by a copious sprinkling of the same sacred perfume. That the savour of this odorous compound must have been extremely grateful to the sense is evident, from the lofty terms in which David speaks of it, and the subject which he illustrates by it: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments." Psalm cxxxiii. 1, 2.

The sons were then invested with their proper

habits, and a three-fold sacrifice was performed: a bullock for a sin-offering; a ram for a burnt-offering; and a second, denominated the ram of consecration. Without going into a minute detail, or pretending to explain the specific difference, use, and end of each, we observe in general, that by the ceremony of the imposition of Aaron's hands and those of his sons upon the head of the victim, a solemn wish was expressed that their guilt might be transferred and imputed to the victim, and its blood accepted as a ransom for their forfeited lives. Here then was the innocent suffering for the guilty; the substitute, not the criminal himself, bleeding and dying: so that the very form of their consecration taught the necessity of atonement, and pointed to Him whom "it pleased the Lord to bruise, and to put him to grief; and who was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah liii. 5.

The first of the three sacrifices, or the sin offering, seems to have been intended as a public and explicit acknowledgment of guilt, and the expiation of it. The second, that is, the burnt-offering, was the token of the divine favour towards them, and of his gracious acceptance of their persons and services: and the third, the ram of consecration, part of which was eaten by the priests in the holy place, was the ratification of God's covenant of peace with them, and the emblem of perfect reconciliation and friendship; sitting at one

common table being the most express declaration of union and good-will among men. God was pleased to exhibit a most unequivocal proof of his being well pleased with the whole transaction ; for when every thing was arranged according to the form prescribed in the mount, fire from the Lord seized and consumed the burnt-offering on the altar. The sin-offering Moses burnt with material fire, without the camp ; but the sacred flame from Heaven laid hold of the sacrifice of pardon and acceptance. In vain do we look for the marks of grace and favour from above, insensible must we be to the genial, penetrating flame of love, unless our repentings be kindled together. When we have been enabled to do our duty, then may we warrantably expect that God will appear for us.

It does not appear whether this striking interposition had been previously announced to the assembly, or whether it took them by surprise.—In either case, it must have made a deep impression on the mind of every beholder. Were they taught to expect it ? With what anxiety may we suppose every eye bent on the altar and the sacrifice, waiting the eventful moment which was to evince that God was among them of a truth ; but in a way which should inspire reverence as well as joy. Did it overtake them unawares ? What sudden consternation, what alarming apprehensions ! The expression was perfectly natural in either case ; “ which, when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.” **Leviticus ix. 24.**

Thus was the first high priest of the Hebrew nation inducted into his office. Thus explicitly were laid down the principles, form, design, and use of the most ancient civil and religious polity in the world. While the first beginnings of religion and government, in every other nation under Heaven, lie buried in darkness, confusion, and contradiction ; aided by light from Heaven, we can trace up to its very source the origin of a nation the most singular in the annals of mankind ; raised out of an ancient pair, and “them as good as dead ;” repeatedly threatened with utter extinction during the first ages of their existence, but miraculously preserved in the very jaws of destruction : formed for conquest, eminence, and empire, in a desert ; raised, after many struggles and revolutions, to a pitch of affluence and grandeur unparalleled in history, and declining again as fast into contempt and obscurity, but even in contempt and obscurity, supported, preserved, fenced on every side.—In captivity, undissolved ; in the wreck of empire maintained, upheld, rescued, restored ! At length we behold them involved in one mighty ruin, driven from their capital and their country : their temple, the great bond of union, razed from the foundation ; and themselves henceforward scattered among the nations, during a period of near two thousand years. And yet, by a strange and unaccountable interference of Providence, though hated, despised, and persecuted of all men, and evidently under the displeasure of Heaven, we behold them preserved from

total annihilation and oblivion; we see them kept distinct from all men, as much a separate people, as in the zenith of their glory, under the reign of David and Solomon; the subjects, perhaps, of a revolution greater and more important than any they have already undergone: reserved, it may be, to be the last grand trophy of the Redeemer's triumph, the concluding evidence of the truth of Christianity, the final monument of the riches of free, sovereign grace!—And need we ask, who conducted all those movements, whose pleasure was fulfilled by all those events, whose glory shines in all those successive changes, in all those opening prospects? A voice from Heaven replies, “I the Lord, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working: wise in heart, and mighty in strength. I see the end from the beginning; my counsel shall stand.”

—When this great mystery shall be finished, the mighty chain extended, the connexion and dependence of link upon link discerned, hell shall be confounded, the inhabitants of the world astonished, angels shall rejoice, and the praises of God ascend from every tongue. —

The solemn service being over, we may suppose Aaron and his family retiring with the complacency of good minds, rejoicing in the honour put upon them, in the eyes of all Israel; in the prospect of a dignity higher than the pomp of kings, which was about to descend to the latest posterity: and, above all, in that open declaration of the divine approbation, the celestial fire that consumed the fat of their

sacrifice. But, alas! what condition of humanity admits of certain, unmixed, or lasting felicity? That useful, necessary, awful element which signally interposed to declare the choice of Heaven, speedily interposes to punish and to afflict that chosen family, and to serve as a warning for ever, that “God will be sanctified in all them that draw nigh to him.”

The remaining incidents of the high priest's life which we have on record, are but few in number, but they are instructive and interesting, as we hope to make appear, if God shall be pleased to indulge us with another opportunity of this kind.

In reviewing the subject, we observe what it is that constitutes the perfect character of a priest of the Most High God;—*Holiness to the Lord* on the forehead; uppermost, overlooking all, directing all; and Israel resting upon the heart.

The ministers of religion are, by their office and station, perpetually admonished to shun every appearance of what is mean, selfish, or ungenerous. They are appointed of God to aid, instruct, and comfort their fellow-creatures; to promote their best interests; to cherish in them the best and noblest principles of their nature: and they are urged to perform this by the highest considerations which the human mind can feel. Whatever be the dispensation, the spirit of the office and the nature of the service are the same. They stand as mediators between God and men. They bear on their hearts the names, the infirmities, the wants, the distresses,

the sorrows, the joys of the people; and carry them with sympathy and affection to the throne of grace: and they return from thence bringing on their lips the "answer of peace." They lose themselves in labours of love; they sink every unworthy aim, every low pursuit in seeking the glory of God and the prosperity of the Israel of God. The minister who understands, feels, and performs his duty, is one of the most exalted of beings.

Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the service of God, and of the congregation, by the sprinkling of *blood* applied to the ear, the hand, the foot. Thus their whole faculties were claimed by their great Author, and were thus devoted to Him: and the symbol of atonement became the seal of their dedication. And thus every Christian becomes a priest unto the Most High God, redeemed by blood, set apart by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. "Wash me, Lord, and I shall be clean, sprinkle me and I shall be whiter than snow." "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. i. 5, 6.

"Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself

“also is compassed with infirmity.” Heb. v. 1, 2.
 But, “if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood
 “(for under it the people received the law), what
 “further need was there, that another priest should
 “rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be
 “called after the order of Aaron?” Heb. vii. 11.
 “But Christ being come an high priest of good
 “things to come, by a greater and more perfect
 “tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say,
 “not of this building; neither by the blood of goats
 “and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in
 “once into the holy place, having obtained eternal
 “redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and
 “of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the
 “unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;
 “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who,
 “through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself with-
 “out spot to God, purge your conscience from
 “dead works to serve the living God?” Heb. ix.
 11—14.

The fire once kindled supernaturally by the ce-
 lestial name, was to be kept alive by human care and
 attention. Miraculous interpositions of Providence
 are not to be expected, as an indulgence to care-
 lessness and sloth. He only who diligently exercises
 the powers which God has given him, who employs
 the means which Providence has furnished and
 which conscience approves, can with confidence
 look up to Heaven, and rejoice in hope of divine
 assistance. Would you that the sacred flame of de-

votion, of charity, should live in your heart, should glow upon your tongue, resort daily to the altar of God, and preserve its activity by "a live coal" from thence. Then your face shall shine, then your lips shall overflow with the law of kindness, then your hand shall open to the sons of want, then you shall "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

LECTURE XI.

NUMBERS XX. 23—29.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into mount Hor, in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount. And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

WERE it not that life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel, human life must appear in the eye of sober reason a trifling scene of vanity and impertinence. Wherefore drops that babe into the grave as soon as he is born? Why was the wretched mother torn with anguish to bring him into the world? Was it only to be torn with more cruel anguish, to behold him prematurely snatched out of it again? Why is that old offender per-

mitted to live, a burden upon the earth, the derision, hatred, and scorn of mankind? Why does that minion "fret and strut his hour upon the stage," arrayed in the glitter of royalty? Wherefore strides that barbarian from conquest to conquest, from continent to continent? Why pines modest worth in indigence and obscurity, and wherefore at length perishes it on a dunghill? These, and a thousand such questions that might be asked, the doctrine of immortality and of a judgment to come resolves in a moment. "We know but in part, we see in a glass darkly." What the great Lord of Nature, Providence, and Grace doth, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

The brevity and extension of life; difference of rank, talent, office, and condition; variety of fortune and success, acquire an importance not their own, by their influence on character and moral conduct, by the changes which they produce on the soul of a man, by their reaching forward into eternity, and by producing effects which no length of duration can ever alter.

Men die, offices pass from hand to hand, dispensations change: but the purposes of Heaven are permanent, the plans of Providence are ever going forward, and while one generation of men removes to that world of spirits from whence no traveller returns, another rises up to contemplate the wonders of that which now is, and to carry on the business of it. Hence wise and good men become not only concerned about their own future and eternal hap-

piness, but about the prosperity and happiness of the world, after they have ceased to see and enjoy it. Hence they cheerfully engage in schemes which they cannot live to execute, and justly soothe their souls to peace, in the prospect of a kind of immortality upon earth. Hence among the other motives to excel in goodness, this has a pleasing and a powerful influence, "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance," "while the memory of the wicked shall rot."

It is as difficult to make the proper estimate of death as of life. Death is an undoubted mark of the divine displeasure against sin, and is inflicted as a punishment upon the guilty. But, like all the punishments of Heaven, it is upon the whole, and in the issue, an unspeakable benefit to good men. The just estimate of death, then, must depend upon what we are, and upon the consequent change which death shall produce in our internal character, or outward condition. It is a light evil to be stripped of priestly robes, the work of man's hands; and to return naked into the earth as we came from it; it is a light thing to feel the earthly house of this tabernacle dissolving, and the head which wore the mitre or the crown sinking into the dust; while the promise of Him who is faithful and true, rears for us "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. v. 1; while the eye of faith contemplates that "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day: and not to one only, but unto

“all them that love his appearing,” 2 Tim. iv. 8; assured that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

If ever there was an enviable domestic situation, it was that of Aaron elevated to the priesthood. Think of the honest pride of honourable alliance: and who would not have been proud of such a brother as Moses? Reflect on an office of the highest dignity and respect, procured not by cabal and intrigue, but bestowed by the voluntary appointment of Him who is the source of all honour. A suitable provision likewise was made for the support of that dignity, and an external habit was annexed to it, that could not fail to attract notice and reverence. The sacred office was entailed upon him and his family for ever, and that family was built up by four hopeful sons, his coadjutors and successors: and to crown the whole, these pleasing, flattering circumstances were crowned with an open, unequivocal, indubitable mark of the divine approbation. The fire of Heaven caught hold of their burnt-offering, and kindled a flame never to be quenched. But alas, how short-lived was this tranquillity! The sons of Aaron are hardly consecrated to their office, when the two eldest profane and disgrace it. Celestial fire has scarcely proclaimed the favour and acceptance of God, when with unhallowed fire, which he commanded not, they defile his altar and his service: and thereby called down a second time fire from above, to avenge a holy and righteous God, as before to display the grace of Him who is good

and merciful. The notoriety of the late transactions, the sacredness of their character, and the distinguished regard of Heaven expressed toward them, greatly enhance the atrociousness of their guilt, and justify the severity of their punishment.—

This tragical event is thus recorded by Moses, whose method it is neither to extenuate, nor to set down aught in malice: “And Nadab and Abihu, “the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, “and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and “offered strange fire before the Lord, which he “commanded them not. And there went out fire “from the Lord, and devoured them, and they “died before the Lord.” Lev. x. 1, 2. The words are few, but they convey a full and distinct idea of the guilt of the parties; though by attending to the context, we shall have reason to conclude that their crime was of a very complex nature. And surely it could be no common transgression which drew down a judgment so dreadful. Bishop Patrick is of opinion that Nadab and Abihu had rendered themselves incapable of doing their duty by intemperance; that they indulged in the delicacies of the sacrifice to a criminal excess, till they were incapable of putting a difference between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean. This conjecture is founded upon the injunction which immediately follows the narration of this dismal story in the ninth and tenth verses. “Do not drink wine nor “strong drink, thou nor thy sons with thee, when “ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation;

“lest ye die : It shall be a statute for ever, through-
 “out your generations ; and that ye may put dif-
 “ference between holy and unholy, and between
 “unclean and clean.” If there be truth in this
 conjecture, it is a melancholy proof that the best
 things are most liable to abuse ; that the brutal part
 of our nature is ever ready to run away with the
 rational : that as God is continually employing him-
 self in bringing good out of evil, so men are for
 ever perversely employing themselves in bringing
 evil out of good.

Others have charged upon these two sons of
 Aaron, the criminality of attempting to enter the
 most holy place, which was not permitted but to the
 high priest, and that only at certain stated times.
 This charge is established in the following manner.
 In the passage we have quoted, it is said, that it was
before the Lord that Nadab and Abihu offered in-
 cense with strange fire. Upon comparing this with
 what is recorded in the sixteenth chapter, in the
 first and second verses, where Moses recapitulates
 this sad event, we find it added, “The Lord said
 “unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that
 “he come not at all times into the holy place, within
 “the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the
 “ark ; that he die not : for I will appear in the
 “cloud upon the mercy seat.” Hence it has been
 inferred that the two young men, uncalled, unau-
 thorised, presumed to enter that august department
 of the tabernacle, assuming to themselves privileges
 that belonged only to the supreme priesthood, which

in their father's life-time it was unlawful to intermeddle with, and which even he himself durst not at all times exercise. But though neither of these suppositions be improbable, we have no occasion to go so far for a discovery of their crime, nor to account for the severity with which it was punished. The sin of Nadab and Abihu consisted simply in this, they burnt incense with *strange fire*. Now the meaning of this expression we shall be able easily to collect, by comparing together a few passages that have an obvious connexion, and which serve to illustrate and explain each other. First, in Leviticus, chapter ix. verse 24, it is said that "fire from the Lord," that is, either fire immediately descending from Heaven, or issuing out of the cloud that covered the tabernacle, consumed the first victims which Aaron offered for a burnt-offering. Again,—This sacred fire, once miraculously kindled was, by a special ordinance, to be kept for ever alive; as we read, Leviticus, chapter vi. verses 12, 13. Thus the vigilance, attention, and care of man, was to preserve and continue what Providence had begun. By another ordinance it was enjoined, that the incense to be offered on the day of atonement, should be kindled by a portion of that perpetual fire. This we read in Leviticus, chapter xvi. verses 11—13. This then was the fire which the Lord commanded to be used; and of course every other kind of fire, however produced, and though in all other respects adequate to the purpose, was unlawful, for-

bidden, or *strange*. This accordingly constituted the guilt; they took upon them to kindle the incense, which their office obliged them to burn every evening and morning, with a fire different from that which burnt continually on the altar of burnt-offering: every other being *strange* fire, which the Lord commanded not. Now it was certainly fit and necessary that such a crime should be punished in the most exemplary manner. The sanctity of the whole institution was over at once, if the ministers of it might with impunity, in the very setting out, presume to dispense with its most august ceremonies. The rank and station of the offenders were a high aggravation of their offence. It was their duty to have set an example of scrupulous regard to the known will of God. They had been admitted to more intimate communion with God than others; they had seen more of the terrors of his power, more of the wonders of his grace. Unhappy men! how had they been betrayed into an error so fatal? Ignorance it could not be, the voice of the law was yet sounding in their ears. Dared they to be careless in any thing that related to the service of a holy God? They had seen the exactness of their pious uncle, in forming every thing according to the pattern showed him in the mount. Was it indeed a wilful and deliberate violation of the law? I fear, I fear it was; and dreadful was the expiation. The unhallowed fire of their own kindling was quickly absorbed in a hotter flame: "they died before the Lord; for there went out fire from the Lord, and

“devoured them.” Lev. x. 2. Neither their sacred character, the sacredness of the place, nor the sacredness of the employment, can protect them from the keen stroke of avenging justice. “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.” Heb. xii. 28, 29. Unhappy father! what were now thy feelings; bereaved in one sad day of half thy children, of thy first, thy darling hopes: to behold them thus immaturely cut off, taken away in anger! The bitterness of death is not relieved by one consolatory circumstance. What is the loss of children in infancy, and falling by the stroke of nature, compared to this? To heighten the old man’s affliction, he is expressly forbidden to mourn, or to assist in the last sad offices of humanity towards his deceased sons. Behold him in mute dejection and distress, ministering in the duties of his charge, attentive to the calls of the living, leaving to others the care of burying the dead. How severely must his own offences now have been brought to his remembrance! He had been guilty of a crime of equal or greater magnitude; he had led the way in idolatry, and had presided in the worship of a thing of his own fabrication; but justice suffered him to live, to live to see his own sons dying for a crime similar to his own. Alas, what is prolonged life, but lengthened anguish!

As the giving of the law was fenced round with fire, and the sanctity of the tabernacle worship

guarded by a flaming sword, so the meeker, gentler institution of the Gospel fortified its first beginnings by executing judgment on presumptuous sinners. Severity is the soul of a law, especially when it is notified to those who are obliged to submit to it; indulgence, or the appearance of feebleness, is of the most dangerous consequence, especially in the commencement of a new constitution. One of the heralds of the Saviour of mankind began his ministry by a clap of thunder; the first rays he shot from his eyes were mortal, and the sudden death of two false and perfidious disciples was the seal of his apostleship. Acts v. 1—10. The second coming of the Lord himself is to be "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. i. 8.

Aaron had now arrived at an advanced period of life, and at the possession of an office and rank in life which rendered him an object of envy to some, and of veneration to others. He had oftener than once been corrected by his own folly, and he was "the man who had seen affliction by the rod of God's anger;" but neither the fire of calamity, nor the frost of age; neither the councils of experience, nor the sanctity of office, have been able to subdue indwelling corruption; for we immediately find him in a plot with Miriam his sister, to disturb the peace, diminish the respect, and distress the government of their brother Moses. Their pretence was his marriage with an "Ethiopian woman;" an

event which had taken place forty years before ; an union which had no immorality in it ; which transgressed no law, for the law was not then given ; and against which God himself had not expressed any displeasure, but had crowned it with the blessing of children, who were justly admitted to rank in Israel.

The real cause was their envy of the pre-eminence which their younger brother had obtained over them in all things, both civil and sacred. For this, in spite of all their art, breaks out in malicious whispers which they scatter abroad to blacken their brother's reputation. "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?" Num. xii. 2. If Moses indeed erred by marrying Jethro's daughter, he had severely smarted for it ; for being induced, by an improper compliance with her humour, to neglect the circumcision of his son, he had nearly paid the forfeit of that neglect with his life, by the hand of God himself ; and now his good name is bleeding on Zipporah's account, by the envenomed tongues of his own brother and sister ; and "Who can stand before envy?" Who can think to escape if Moses remain not unhurt? This attack upon his fame and comfort gives Moses occasion to deliver his own eulogium ; and I believe it to be just, for he gives it with that lovely simplicity which characterizes all that he relates of himself or of others. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Num. xii. 3. He either had

not heard the scandalous speeches which were propagated to his disadvantage by Aaron and Miriam; or he pitied and neglected them. Who knows what length the mischief might have gone, had it not been heard and avenged by the Protector of injured innocence "The Lord heard it." Let the slanderer hear this and tremble.

The two brothers and their sister are now summoned to present themselves together at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord appears: and a voice from that glory pronounces aloud, and at full length, the praise of the man who had spoken so modestly of himself, and who had been so wickedly maligned by his own nearest relations. "And he said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold; wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses!" Numb. xii. 6—8. In many respects Moses was "the figure of him who was to come," and in both were peculiarly verified the words of Christ, "A man's foes shall they be of his own house," and, "a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." Matt. xiii. 57.—With God to resent is to avenge; having reprov'd the transgressors he

withdraws his anger, and lo the punishment is already inflicted. "The cloud departed from off the tabernacle, and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow : and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold she was leprous." Num. xii. 10. A shocking example of divine displeasure against one of the most odious of crimes. My fair hearers, let me whisper an advice in your ears. I am no common-place declaimer against your sex, I honour it, and I wish to improve it ; you must hear me with the greater attention, and mark what I say. You lie under a general imputation respecting the vices of the tongue ; but general imputations are for the most part ill-founded. I do not mean, however, to insinuate that you are totally innocent, or more so than the other sex ; for your affections are eager, and what the heart feels, by the eyes or the tongue you will express ; and that expression is sometimes too strong for either piety or prudence. I mean to caution you, at present, on a particular fault of the tongue, which affects my own profession, which is far from being foreign to the subject, and on which I deem myself both qualified and entitled to advise you. Women, among other favourite objects, have their favourite systems of religion, and their favourite preachers ; and, following the impulse of perhaps an honest affection, they are for establishing their favourite object on the ruins of every competitor. What is the consequence ? In the event of difference of opinion, or of attachment, one man is unmercifully, unrelentingly run down ; and another is, with

equal want of reason, magnified and exalted. Women, young women, good young women, think they are only yielding to the impulse of a pious affection, when they applaud or censure this or the other public character. But what are they doing indeed? Blowing up one poor vain idol of straw into self-consequence and importance; and piercing through, on the other hand, an honest heart with anguish unutterable; perhaps robbing a worthy, happy family of its bread, or what is more, of its peace and comfort. I am no stranger to what is by some termed religious conversation; and I am seriously concerned about the topics of it. It generally turns upon persons, not upon things. Now it ought to be just the reverse. Persons always mislead us, for no one is wholly impartial: but truth is eternal and unchangeable. Apply then the test: Does the conversation dwell upon this man or his neighbour, his rival or his enemy, check it, away with it, what have the interests of piety to do in the case? Had he never been born, "the foundation of God" would have stood as it does, without his feeble aid. Call no man master in sacred things, but Christ; and take care that you measure neither orthodoxy, sense, nor virtue, by the imperfect, fluctuating standard of your own caprice, affection, or understanding. Were similar punishment instantly to follow the vices of the tongue, as in the case of Miriam, I shudder to think how many a fair face, now lovely to the sight, must by to-morrow morning stand in need of a veil; but not for the

same reason that the face of Moses did on his descending from the mount, to temper its lustre; but to shroud its loathsomeness and deformity. Consider what hath been said, and "set a watch on the door of your lips," and "keep the heart with all diligence."

LECTURE XII.

NUMBERS XX. 23—29.

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into mount Hor, in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount. And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

THE love of life is one of the most useful and important principles implanted in human nature: and death, the necessary end of all men, is an event mercifully and in wisdom hidden from our eyes. Hoping that we may live till to-morrow, we feel ourselves impelled to exert ourselves to day, to make some provision for it. Not knowing the time of their death, men are engaged to act as if they were immortal. And though no wise man would "wish to live always," or can deem it possible, yet the pre-

cise period never comes when we find ourselves so entirely unoccupied with temporal prospects or pursuits, so totally mortified to the world, as to be disposed with cheerfulness to leave it. Hence the business of the world goes on, which would otherwise stand still ! and that God, of whose years there can be no end, is carrying on designs of everlasting moment, by frail and short-lived instruments. This man makes a few feeble, dying efforts, and expires. Another comes after him, takes up the instrument which his fellow had laid down, makes his stroke or two, and expires likewise ; and yet by means of efforts so weak, so interrupted and self-destroying, the purposes of Heaven proceed, the building of God rises ; every loss is instantly repaired, every defect is supplied, and no chasm in the chain of Providence is permitted to take place. Hence men are dignified with the title of fellow-workers with God, and the perishing attempts of perishing creatures are employed in maturing the plans of infinite wisdom, and are honoured by the acceptance and approbation of Him who “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” What a motive to diligence, exertion, and perseverance ?

“ I paint for eternity,” replied the great artist of antiquity, when reprehended for an over-curious, painful, and laborious attention to the more nice and delicate touches of his favourite pieces. What a lesson of encouragement, admonition, and re-

proof to Christians ! They are indeed acting for eternity ; not, like the painter, pursuing the empty bubble reputation, but aiming at “ the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.” They are striving continually to bring a new tribute of praise to God, and to promote the everlasting happiness of mankind.

It is truly pitiable to see a poor creature cleaving to life after the relish of it is gone, merely from a fond attachment to the things of time. It is more lamentable still, to behold a miserable wretch shrinking from death, through a well-grounded horror of its consequences. But to desire life from a desire of doing good ; to be willing to continue in the flesh, for the greater good of the church and of the world, argues a great, a noble, and disinterested spirit ; it excites our love and admiration. That man is indeed immortal, the daily language of whose conduct is, “ Let me perform at least one good action more. I know I am to die, let my tongue then yet once again speak praise to God and instruction to man, before it becomes for ever silent. Before the cold hand of death freezes up the genial current at my heart, let it pour out the gentle stream of kindness, sympathy, and love. While this arm is able as yet to extend itself, and this hand to expand, let it be extended to protect the oppressed, to support the weak ; let it be expanded to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to relieve the miserable. Ere my eyes close, to open no more, let some one of the wonderful

“ things of God again pass through them, to revive
“ my drooping spirits, to cheer and elevate my
“ sinking soul; and before I divest myself of my
“ robes of office, never to resume them, let me
“ humbly endeavour to minister to the Lord, and to
“ the spiritual wants of men, in the duties of my
“ station.”

Calm and composed as was the death of Aaron, we advance towards it with slowness and reluctance, and therefore with eagerness seize the occasion which Scripture affords, of adverting to some farther incidents of his life, before we come to the history of that fatal event.

It was with astonishment and grief, we saw him engaged in a plan of disaffection and sedition against his amiable and excellent brother; and in wonder mixed with terror, we observed the mingled lenity and severity of the punishment inflicted by God on that impious, unnatural, and ungrateful conduct. But the offence was not expiated when Miriam was struck with leprosy, and Aaron thereby tacitly reprehended; when Miriam was restored, and Israel permitted to move forwards. Transgressors often flatter themselves that surely the bitterness of death is past, when a righteous God is but awakening to vengeance; and it is not seldom found, that between crimes and punishments there is such an apparent affinity, that the criminal cannot but find his guilt in the evil which overtakes him: and the world is made to “see,” not only “the rod,” but “him that hath appointed it.”

Six years have elapsed, from the sedition of Aaron and Miriam, when a similar conspiracy is formed to discredit the government of Moses, and the priesthood of Aaron, by certain turbulent, envious, and ambitious men of their own tribe, in confederacy with some of a similar spirit of the tribe of Reuben. So widely, and so suddenly has the malignity of revolt spread itself, that no less than two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown, with their adherents, have been infected by it: and Aaron has his large share of that obloquy which he had before so unjustly employed to weaken the hands, and to blast the reputation of his brother. But ah! my friends, a leprosy of seven days could not wash away the stain of this transgression; neither could the blood of one unhappy victim make atonement for a crime in which so many were involved. The Lord creates "a new thing," to mark the severity of his hot displeasure. When Moses had made an end of denouncing the judgment of God, it came to pass that "the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

Num. xvi. 31—33, 35. A plague broke out among the people, which before it was stayed by the interposition of the high priest himself, offering incense between the living and the dead, had consumed fourteen thousand seven hundred.

What, O Aaron, were now thy feelings, surveying a field of blood so dreadful and so extensive ! What were thy feelings in reflecting that for the very offence which thou thyself hadst committed, Miriam was a leper, and thousands were slain ! Did not thy heart melt, as the sword of the destroying angel laid heaps upon heaps, whilst thou stoodst in the fearful gap ; trembling lest its keen edge should reach thyself ?

It is remarkable, that the enormity of the greater crimes which Aaron committed, was exposed by the judgments wherewith God visited similar crimes in others, not in himself ; whereas, for an apparently lighter transgression, his life was irrecoverably forfeited, and he fell under a doom which no penitence nor supplication could alter or avert. We cannot judge of the malignity of crimes from certain external circumstances. Both in the good which men do, and in the evil they commit, God principally regards the heart and intention ; but to discern and to judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart, is a prerogative which with awful propriety he has reserved to himself.

God has punished the defection of Korah and his abettors in the most open and exemplary manner. Not satisfied with this, because the memory of judgments the most signal and alarming is not

speedily to be obliterated—such is the thoughtlessness and folly of men ! He was pleased to appoint a lasting memorial of the preference which he had bestowed on Aaron and his family, and to confer a fresh badge of distinction on the man whom he delighted to honour. Moses is directed to take of each of the tribes of Israel a several rod, and to inscribe every one with the name of the prince of that tribe to which it belonged, writing the name of Aaron on the rod of the tribe of Levi. They were to be laid up together over night before the Lord, in the tabernacle of the congregation, before the testimony, and previous intimation was given to all concerned, that by the next morning God would give an explicit and unequivocal declaration of his will, respecting the office of priesthood.

The God whom we adore, would rather make himself known by the wonders which he performs, and by the mercies which he dispenses, than by the judgments which he executes. It was fulfilled accordingly. The rods of the eleven other tribes remained as they were deposited ; separated from the parent stock, sapless, withered, and dead : but the rod of Aaron, as if it had been still a branch united to a living root, and by a progress of vegetation infinitely more rapid than nature knows, in the course of one night brought “ forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.” Num. xvii. 8. And lo, a miracle as great as a lifeless twig bringing forth fruit, the fierce and angry spirit which acts of just vengeance had but irritated, is, by a miracle of kindness and condescension, mollified,

melted, subdued, extinguished : and thus necessary are signs and wonders to silence and persuade murmuring, unbelieving Hebrews, as well as to render inexcusable impenitent Egyptians.

* This mark of preference having been openly exhibited, for the conviction and satisfaction of all, commandment is once more given to carry back this wondrous rod, and to deposit it by itself before God, with the other sacred furniture of the most holy place, to serve to latest posterity as one of the precious monuments of the divine favour to their forefathers. It is highly probable that it always preserved that verdure to which it was thus preternaturally restored ; and it is a lively image of the constant preservation of the universe by that all-powerful Word which spake it into existence at first ; of the continued support of life by the merciful visitation of that Spirit who “ breathed into “ man’s nostrils the breath of life ; and man became “ a living soul.” Gen. ii. 7.

Aaron, thus again distinguished and honoured of Heaven, continues to enjoy the dignity, and to perform the duties of priesthood for thirty-one years longer ; we doubt not, with credit to himself, and to the satisfaction and advantage of all Israel. But alas ! he has the mortification of seeing that people gradually and imperceptibly wasting away before his eyes ! he feels himself the dying minister of a dying congregation ; he observes the hand of justice doing that by slow degrees which it might have accomplished at once, and employing forty years in

what it could have made the work of a single moment. At length the stroke of death comes home to his own family, and it may be presumed to his very heart. In the one hundred and twentieth year of his age, and thirty-seventh of his priesthood, Miriam, his sister by nature, his friend by habit and affection, and, sad to think, his companion in offence, is removed to a world of spirits, and he is warned of his own departure by the loss of one of his nearest and dearest relations. Moses delineates her character with singular conciseness and simplicity. The hand which she had in his preservation, when he was exposed in early infancy upon the Nile, procures her an interest in his affection, and in those of his readers, which the blameableness of some parts of her after-conduct is unable wholly to destroy. Our censure of her envy and malignity in more advanced life is somewhat softened by the recollection of her childish tenderness, attachment, vigilance, and address; and while we condemn the vehemence of her spirit, and the unruliness of her tongue, the edge of resentment is blunted, when we see her punished there where a female is most vulnerable, in the fairness of her looks, and the agreeableness of her person; and we heartily join in the prayer of Aaron in her behalf: "Alas, my Lord, let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb;" and in that of Moses himself, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." From thence to the hour of her death, a period of thirty-

seven years, the history is entirely silent concerning her, and this is perhaps the highest praise that can be bestowed upon her. The sharp reproof which she had received, for presuming to intermeddle in public affairs, had taught her, we are bound in charity to believe, that the post of honour for a woman is a private station; that she is then most distinguished, most respectable, most valuable, when the world knows and talks least about her.

That self-same year the fatal summons is addressed to Aaron also, and one brother is made the messenger of death to the other. The same hand which arrayed him in splendid apparel, and consecrated him to the high and honourable office of priesthood, must strip him again, and anoint him to his burying. The whole progress of this solemn scene is highly pathetic and interesting. Let us attend the funeral procession to the top of mount Hor, and learn to die to the vanity and glory of this world, and to cleave, with increased ardour, to that Gospel, by which "life and immortality are brought to light," and to trust in that great High Priest who, though he "was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore," and giveth "eternal life to as many as he will."

Death, the most common of all events, at every season, and in whatever form it comes, is tremendous and affecting; but the appearance of death in the scene before us is altogether singular and uncommon. It is indeed the death of an old man, but is not occasioned by any apparent decay of nature,

is not preceded by long sickness, is not hastened on by disease or accident; but the spirit is surrendered at the command of God, in the fulness of health, in the composure of perfect recollection, without a hesitation of reluctant nature, without regret, without a pang. When sentence of death was pronounced upon Moses himself, and for the self-same transgression which shortened the life of Aaron, we find the fondness of nature, and the fervour of religion, repeatedly uniting to crave a reprieve at least, if not a total remission: but Aaron, when summoned to depart, whether it was from superior fortitude of mind, from the consciousness of greater demerit, or that the historian has charitably drawn a veil over a brother's infirmity, while he frankly exposes his own, prepares instantly and cheerfully for the event.

Were we to follow the impulse of imagination, we might, without overleaping the modesty of nature, represent to you the deep concern wherewith the good man's own family was affected when the award of death was pronounced; the concern of all Israel at the thought of being deprived of the labours, the advices, the example, and the prayers of their venerable high priest; the concern of Moses in being made the messenger, almost the executioner of death, upon his much-loved brother, associate, and friend; himself too lying under the same condemnation.—If, after he received the command to ascend the mountain that he might die, he was permitted to minister in the priest's office any more,

to pour out the blood of the sacrifice, to burn incense upon the altar, to lift up his hands and bless the people; with what holy fervour may we suppose these sacred services performed! with what devout attention would they be listened unto and waited upon, when both minister and people knew for certain they were to meet no more! May we not suppose the good man, in strains such as these, taking a last, long farewell, of those to whom he had for so many years stood in a relation so tender and so intimate: "The time of my departure, O Israel, is
" at length come, and I am ready to be offered up.—
" That God who appointed me to serve you in holy
" things, permits me to wait at his altar no longer.
" I have fulfilled my day. I have finished my
" course. I have survived the greatest part of my
" contemporaries, but must die at length. I leave
" you with remorse, because I accuse myself of
" many failures in point of duty towards you; I
" leave you with regret, because I sincerely love
" you; I leave you with joy, because I can with
" confidence commit you to a guardian Providence,
" even to the God of your fathers, who can easily
" supply my place by one wiser, holier, and more
" faithful than me; and who, I trust, will continue
" still to rule and to lead you by that best of men,
" of brothers, and of friends. My body leaves you,
" but my spirit cannot be separated from you; in
" death it will cleave unto you; and when set free
" from the clogs of sense, it will still hover over
" you, attend your journeyings, and finally rest in

“ peace when Israel rests in the promised land.
“ These forty years have I borne your names en-
“ graved on jewels upon my heart, and I will carry
“ you with me in my heart to the regions of eternal
“ day. Farewell, my sons; Elcazar, the heir of
“ my dignity and anxiety, and Ithamar, my young-
“ est hope. Think of the dreadful fate of your
“ elder brothers, and serve the Lord with reverence
“ and godly fear. Think of your father’s errors, and
“ learn wisdom. Ponder his approaching dissolu-
“ tion, and learn the nothingness of human gran-
“ deur. Call to your remembrance what Providence
“ has done to and for me, and rejoice with trem-
“ bling. Again I am summoned away; it is the
“ voice of Moses, of my brother; it is the voice of
“ God I hear. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;
“ the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and
“ be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his coun-
“ tenance upon thee, and give thee peace. I come,
“ my brother; I know whose command thou bear-
“ est; I know that I must obey. But to part with
“ thee is the bitterness of death; endeared as we are
“ to each other by friendship, as allied by blood
“ —conjoined in office, knit together by habits of
“ affection, united in life, and, blessed reflection,
“ not to be long divided by death. Thou wilt bury
“ all my unworthiness in the grave; thou hast
“ already buried it in the profounder, silen-er tomb
“ of a gentle and forgiving heart. I come, oh my
“ God, at thy call; I desire not to live, if thou bid-
“ dest me to die. Yet I mourn to think that my

“ death is a mark of thy displeasure. But I see the
 “ sun shining through the cloud; it is not wholly in
 “ anger that thou art summoning me away; thou
 “ art graciously putting an end to my painful la-
 “ bours, my anxious thoughts, my imperfect ser-
 “ vices, to my weaknesses and wanderings, and ex-
 “ alting me to a dignity far beyond what I have
 “ hitherto enjoyed. I shall see thee as thou art. I
 “ shall serve thee without wearying. I shall offend
 “ no more. Henceforth is laid up for me a diadem
 “ for glory and for beauty, a crown of righteousness
 “ that fadeth not away. O death, where is thy
 “ sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Arise, let
 “ us go hence. Arise, let us ascend to the top of
 “ the mountain.”

Having, in whatever language, bidden a final
 adieu to worldly connexions, in the sight of all the
 people, the high priest, in all the splendour of his
 official habit, sad and solemn, climbs up the hill
 from which he never was to descend. What were
 the emotions of Israel in gradually losing sight of
 their venerable patriarch, to see him no more again
 for ever! What were the feelings of the patriarch,
 in surveying from the summit of the mountain the
 goodly tents of Jacob, in which he had an earthly
 concern no longer! Nature casts many “ a long-
 “ ing, lingering look behind;” but faith looks for-
 ward, and beholds mortality swallowed up of life.
 Nature regrets a promised land; unseen, unpos-
 sessed, enjoyed, because of unbelief: faith stretches
 the wing, and aims a bold, but not uncertain flight,

to a heavenly Canaan, where "the wicked cease
"from troubling, and the weary are for ever at
"rest."

The spirit fails as we proceed. The death-warrant is again recited. The justice of the sentence is acknowledged, and the prisoner prepares for death. The golden crown, the mitre, the girdle, the ephod, the breast-plate, are one after another deposited, and human glory is patiently surrendered. As they were severally yielded up by the father, they are severally assumed by the son. Stripped of all that covered the body, the body itself is at length laid down, and the mortal blow is at length struck by Him who saith, "I make alive, and I kill." Aaron dies, but Eleazar lives. The priest expires, but the priesthood is immortal. Three ascend, only two return. What matters it how the poor perishing clay tabernacle were disposed of? About the spirit of the man whom God thus called away, we can be under no anxiety nor apprehension. A general, and I doubt not an unaffected mourning of thirty days takes place; and all Israel lament when dead the man whom many had envied, maligned, and persecuted through life.

This is one of the many happy consequences and effects of death! It shuts the mouth of scandal; it brings to light unnoticed or obscured virtues; it draws the veil over blemishes and imperfections.

Let the son of pride, who is rising into splendour, and who bears "his blushing honours thick upon
"him," turn his eyes to the top of yonder moun-

tain, and learn the nothingness of all the glory of man. Is his station higher than that of the high priest of Israel? Are his vestments more magnificent, is his character more sacred, is his dignity more permanent, flow his honours from a higher source? Behold Aaron laid low; retiring from the world naked, as naked he came into it; the head which once wore the mitre, levelled with the dust; the tongue which once spoke so well, for ever dumb.

The hour of rest nightly admonishes us of the last fatal hour. We strip ourselves of our garments one by one, and lay them down; we are reduced to the image of death; the eye is closed; our faculties are absorbed; the form of the man only remains. And the time is at hand, we know it, when we must put off this body, as an uneasy, worn-out, useless, vestment, fit only for the moth or the dunghill. "Man must say to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my sister and mother." "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of the field."

Our very children are the harbingers of our dissolution. They are the pleasantest, but the plainest monitors. Every step they rise brings us a little lower; as they grow stronger and stronger, we grow weaker and weaker. They wait to assume our name, our place, our robes, our office; they are ready to array themselves in our spoils.. The elevation of Eleazar is the fall of Aaron. The public life of the son is the death of the sire.

Look to that mountain, O man, and reflect, that he whom now you hate, envy, oppose, malign, will speedily be changed into a clod of earth, and rendered incapable of feeling or returning thy animosity; and learn to die betimes to those wicked and odious passions. Suppose him laid on the bed of death; stripped of those honours, talents, advantages, successes which render him the object of jealousy and malignity to thee. How you are disarmed! Pity and tenderness awake in your breast. You now hate yourself, that ever you could hate your brother. Let the reflection of what may so soon happen reconcile thee to him now. Mar not thy own comfort by seeking to disturb his repose. The cold hand of death will speedily extinguish the angry flame.

“They truly were many priests, because they
“were not suffered to continue by reason of death:
“But this man, because he continueth ever, hath
“an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is
“able also to save them to the uttermost that come
“unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make in-
“tercession for them.” Heb. vii. 23—25. * He
“need not daily, as those high priests, to offer up
“sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the
“people’s: for this he did once, when he offered
“up himself. For the law maketh men high priests
“which have infirmity; but the word of the oath
“which was since the law maketh the Son, who is
“consecrated for evermore.” Heb. vii. 27, 28.

